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The Atlantic Monthly

NOVEMBER 1999

THE POWER AND COST OF A FANTASY

by SUE ERIKSON BLOLAND



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ITS PSYCHOLOGICAL ROOTS, ITS
SOCIAL MEANING, ITS HUMAN COST

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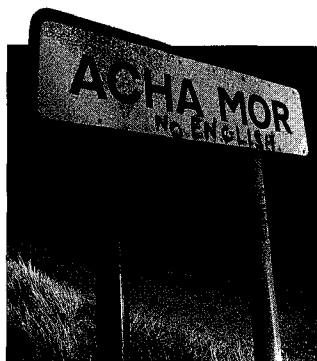


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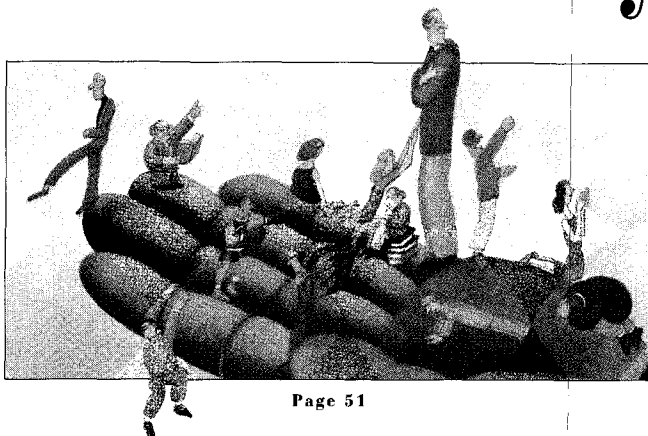
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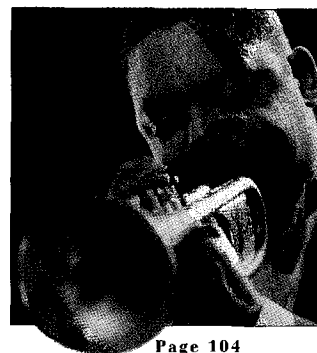
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The daughter of Erik Erikson, herself a therapist, has struggled for years "to understand the emotional intensity that is associated with fame." We imagine, she writes, that our heroes have transcended the adversities of the human condition. We want to believe that they have arrived at a secure place of self-approval. "But the truth is," she concludes in a deeply personal essay, "that the security of the self is never stable."

by Sue Erikson Bloland

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Since the Supreme Court reinstated the death penalty, in 1976, more than eighty death-row inmates have been freed, their convictions overturned by evidence of innocence. We have no way of knowing if any innocent people have been put to death. We do know this: the likelihood of mistakes is growing.

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**WHEN CHUCK YEAGER BECAME THE
FIRST MAN TO BREAK THE SOUND BARRIER, HE HAD
A ROLEX CHRONOMETER ON HIS WRIST.**

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77 NORTH WASHINGTON STREET

READING Erik H. Erikson's *Childhood and Society* (1950), one was terrified. The eight stages of development Erikson outlined were intimidating if one was still dealing with Stage 3 (Initiative) when one was supposed to be in the tall cotton of Stage 8 (Integrity). Erikson's daughter, Sue Erikson Bloland, the author of this month's cover story, "Fame," objects to the implication in her father's scheme that the stages happen in a kind of lockstep sequence, and that a person finishes with one before moving on to the next. How, she asks, can one talk about Intimacy (Stage 6), Autonomy (Stage 2), and Identity (Stage 5) as issues to be worked on independent of one another?

Bloland received a degree in philosophy from Oberlin College and went on to study anthropology and sociology at the University of California at Berkeley and the New School for Social Research, in New York City. "Despite marriage and motherhood, I still felt like an adolescent in my thirties," she says. She had a latent ambition to be a psychotherapist, but "my father took up so much space in the profession that it seemed there was no room for me." Only when his powers were clearly waning did

she become a therapist. She says that the long struggle to come to terms with her father's celebrity which she describes in "Fame" has made her a better therapist today. Bloland maintains a private practice and also writes, lectures, and conducts workshops. She is currently at work on a book about fame.



ROBERT DOWNEY

Her primary interests include the impact on women in midlife of negative cultural attitudes toward aging. "Women go through a deep process of mourning about losing their looks," she says. Youth, profitably in this culture, is the medium of beauty. In many ways women age better than men, and they do not lose their sexuality, as the cultural myth suggests; yet past fifty they become "invisible," whereas grandfathers can take up with women half their age with cultural impunity. Bloland encourages women to embrace the freedom from feminine stereotypes that is the real gift of middle age. And she notices a welcome trend: actresses like Meryl Streep, Judi Dench, Susan Sarandon, and Rene Russo, who still get good parts, are making midlife more visible, suggesting that the culture is not beyond change. —THE EDITORS

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Yehuda Amichai ("After Auschwitz") is an Israeli poet and the author of *Open Closed Open* (1998), which will be published in an American edition in the spring.

Alan Berlow ("The Wrong Man") is a freelance journalist and the author of *Dead Season: A Story of Murder and Revenge* (1998).

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Leon F. Litwack ("Forgotten Heroes of Freedom") is the Morrison Professor of American History at the University of California at Berkeley. His book *Been in the Storm So Long: The Aftermath of Slavery* (1980) was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for history.

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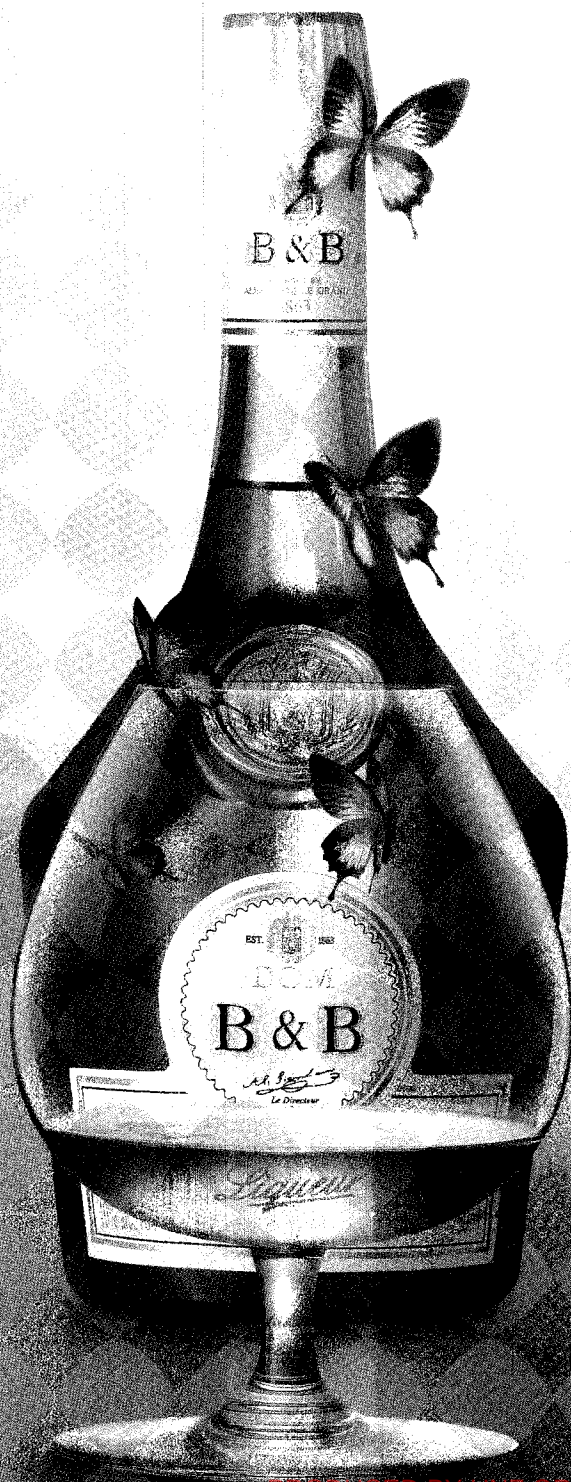
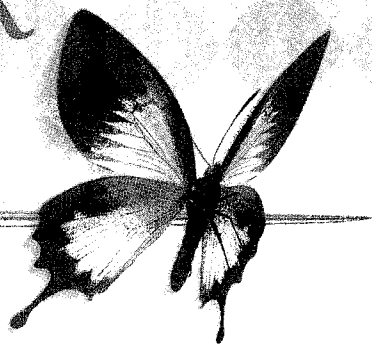
Jeffrey Tayler ("India's Grand Trunk Road") lives in Moscow. His first book, *Siberian Dawn*, was published last year.

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Geoffrey Wheatcroft ("Did Braveheart Die for Devolution?") won a National Jewish Book Award for *The Controversy of Zion* (1996).

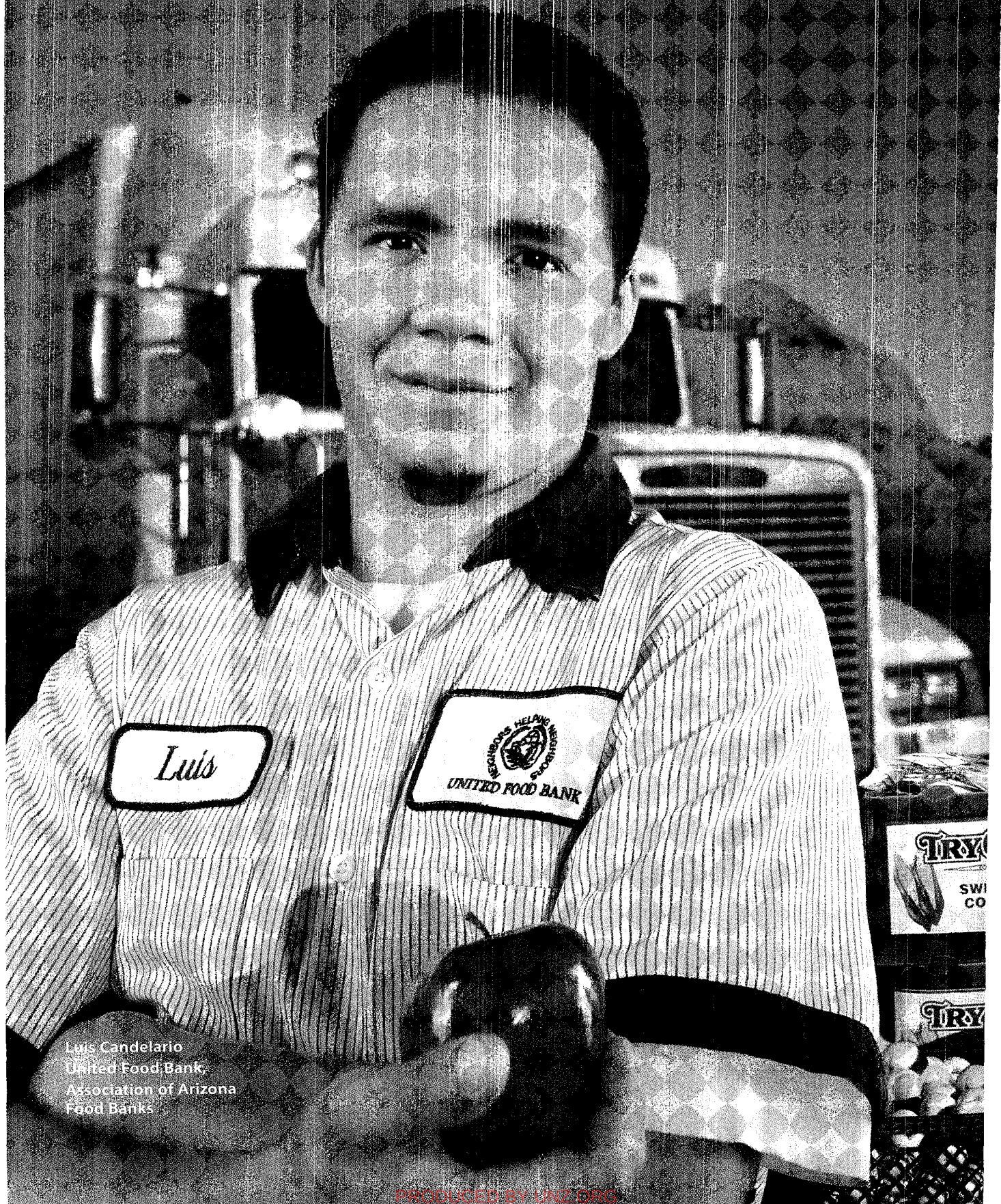
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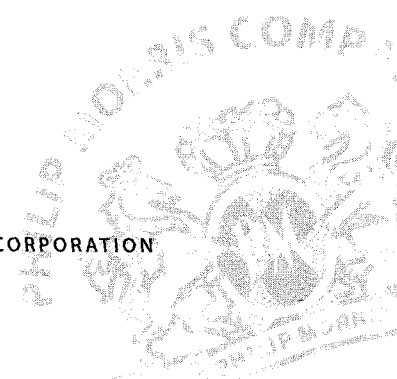
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LETTERS

Generation X

Ted Halstead's frustrating analysis of an entire generation's political beliefs and aspirations ("A Politics for Generation X," August *Atlantic*) didn't even manage to scratch the surface of the problems that face us. Not that Halstead was entirely wrong; in fact, I believe that some form of philosophical and political pragmatism may be the only solution. Our problems, though, run much deeper. We lack any kind of historical perspective, any perception of why our country is the way it is. We are not leaders, no matter how much advertising and pop culture try to make us believe otherwise. We have plenty of money and almost no ability to stop spending. Our worlds are shaped and guided by our taste in mass-market films and music.

In general, my generation lacks any kind of rooted aesthetic or ethical sense. I know this sounds harsh, but turn on the radio or go to the multiplex and you'll see: media executives are forthright about how eager they are to take our money—Generation X is the most desirable demographic in the country—and most often "our" entertainment is little more than a focus group's lame approximation of what we like.

The Boomer right took to Wall Street and Silicon Valley with a terrifying and rapacious greed; they assisted their elders in constructing multinational trusts and eliminating all humane interaction between workers and employers. The Boomer left dismantled our education establishment by deconstructing their own knowledge, rejecting it as white-imperialist propaganda, and replacing it with nonthreatening utopian tracts of dubious quality.

Now the most educated among us work in media-related fields, swallowing the techno-propaganda that our parents' generation feeds us. Any resistance earns the epithet "Luddite": you're either a booster or a caveman. We experience simultaneous flattery and condescension; our pride is stoked in order to earn access to either our wallets or our programming abilities.

As far as our religious beliefs go, my

generation should stop our parents' stupid abuse of the word "spiritual." Religion isn't a selfish pursuit; if you want to adopt a faith (I choose not to), do it for the ethical teachings, not for the achievement of inner peace. One thing religion should teach you is that there is no inner peace when others suffer.

Joel Gordon
Brooklyn, N.Y.

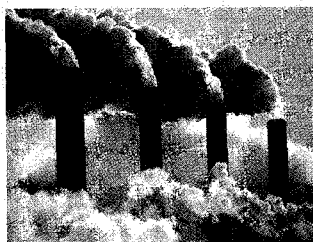
Regarding Ted Halstead's provocative final question: I believe we who are the children of Boomers will overcome our "aversion to politics" and get involved when we have our own children—when we look at our sons and daughters and realize that we cannot remain children ourselves any longer.

Chris Owen
Wilton, N.H.

Ted Halstead correctly says that the payroll tax "is the most regressive of all taxes." However, his solution—replacing payroll taxes with pollution taxes—would hardly "galvanize the members of Generation X," nor is it fiscally sound. The tax would be enormous, it would not be a long-term solution, and it is even more regressive than the payroll tax.

First, a large amount of revenue would need to be replaced. According to the Congressional Budget Office, the U.S. government collected \$572 billion in payroll taxes in 1998. Assuming that half of this revenue could be collected from gasoline taxes, and using Redefining Progress's revenue-estimating methodology, an additional gasoline tax of \$3 a gallon would be needed (one cent raises about one billion dollars). Somehow I doubt that the average Generation Xer will want to spend more than \$30 to fill up the gas tank. And that's for a small car.

Second, to be effective, pollution taxes should reduce pollution, which can occur only if fossil-fuel consumption falls. Over the long term, people would substitute clean energy for fossil fuels because of the tax, with the result that fossil-fuel consumption would decline, and with it the



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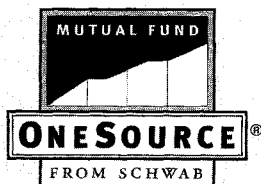
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amount of revenue collected from the pollution tax. But the entitlement programs funded by payroll taxes need funding each year. Eventually another source of revenue would be needed.

Third, a pollution tax would be more regressive than the payroll tax. Pollution taxes are generally excise taxes, which means that people pay the same amount of tax regardless of their income. No tax is more regressive than an excise tax—except perhaps the poll tax.

Thomas Kornfield

Arlington, Va.

Ted Halstead replies:

Joel Gordon attests to the political frustration of Gen-Xers and their propensity to reject the nostrums of right and left, but veers astray when he suggests that all Xers "have plenty of money."

Chris Owen may be correct that most Xers will not engage in the political process until they become parents, but that would be a shame, because our polity is currently in dire need of new ideas and new leaders.

Thomas Kornfield makes good points about substituting pollution levies for payroll taxes. Given that the payroll tax is the largest and most regressive tax facing ordinary wage earners, reducing it would do far more to help working Americans get ahead than any of the tax-cut proposals now being discussed on Capitol Hill. As for fiscal prudence, offsetting payroll-tax cuts with other sources of revenue makes more sense than financing huge tax cuts out of a surplus that has yet to materialize. I would propose exempting the first \$10,000 of wages from payroll taxes and replacing the roughly \$140 billion in lost revenue through the auction of tradable carbon permits (which the majority of economists view as the soundest way to address global warming). Contrary to Kornfield's contention that such revenues would shrink over time, the laws of supply and demand suggest that receipts from the auction of carbon permits would actually increase as the total number of available permits was reduced.

Population Surprise

According to Max Singer ("The Population Surprise," August *Atlantic*), "The big surprise of the past twenty years is that in not one country did fertility stop falling when it reached the replacement

rate—2.1 children per woman." Simply stated, Singer is wrong.

By examining fertility rates in the United States, one finds errors in Singer's logic. At the end of the Baby Boom (1960–1964) the total fertility rate (TFR) for the United States stood at 3.5. By the end of the 1960s that rate had fallen to 2.6, and by the early 1970s it was at replacement level. For several years the TFR continued falling, reaching its historical low of 1.7 in 1976. Since that time, however, it has been gradually climbing back to around replacement level, where it remains today.

Singer asks the reader to believe that the lowest possible fertility rates will occur worldwide, that the demographic trends of the past few decades will intensify and continue indefinitely, and that the demographic behavior of a few industrialized nations over the past few decades is our future. If you believe Singer's flawed logic, why not believe high-end assumptions that have the world's population growing to 27 billion by 2150?

Given current trends in world population growth, Singer's prediction of a world population smaller than the U.S. population today may indeed come to pass. But the cause won't be a birth dearth; it will be pollution, disease, famine, war, and the widespread collapse of environmental life-support systems and the human social infrastructure and economy.

Sharon McCloe Stein

Negative Population Growth

Washington, D.C.

Max Singer writes of the very long term, "a century or two or three," and concludes that there is little need to be concerned with growth or decline in the world population, because modern society will be ready, willing, and able to choose for itself the number of children that should be born. While we await the coming of modern society to the world as a whole, more than a billion people today are not able to make decisions about how many children they want. They lack knowledge of reproductive health; most do not have health care that enables them to have confidence that their children will survive; they do not know of or have access to contraception; and women have many fewer opportunities than men for choices of every kind. These failings of today's world society can be and should be addressed with the means now available in those countries that are fortunate enough to be

blessed with what passes for modernity.

Paul Micou

*United States Committee for the United Nations Population Fund
New York, N.Y.*

Max Singer replies:

Sharon Stein says that increased fertility associated with the U.S. postwar Baby Boom contradicts my statement that in not one country did fertility stop falling when it hit the replacement rate. As I reported, a temporary upturn in U.S. fertility occurred more than a generation ago, after which the 200-year downward trend resumed, with fertility staying below replacement for twenty-five years. But that doesn't contradict the experience in some fifty countries that the replacement rate is not a barrier to falling fertility. Overall experience strongly indicates that unless values change, overall world fertility will go below replacement level in the first part of the twenty-first century and stay below long enough to produce many years of world population decline. My estimates are based on an attempt to impose as few assumptions as possible on the interpretation of the past. Lower or higher estimates would also be reasonable. We cannot get away from uncertainty.

I agree with Paul Micou that programs encouraging contraception should not be stopped even though world population will begin declining in 2050.

Tabloid Law

Alex Beam writes in "Tabloid Law" (August *Atlantic*), "The same First Amendment invoked by Williams & Connolly to allow *The Washington Post* to publish the Pentagon Papers grants the tabloids enormous leeway in examining celebrities' lives."

Williams & Connolly were not involved with the *Post*'s publication of the Pentagon Papers, because the firm was not representing the *Post* at that time. Ben Bradlee did consult Ed Williams as a personal friend, as described in Katherine Graham's *Personal History*. The *Post* was ably represented by William R. Glendon, of Royall Koegel and Wells.

Shirley R. Newhall
Londonderry, Vt.

Alex Beam replies:

Shirley Newhall is right that Williams & Connolly did not formally represent *The Washington Post* in the Pentagon Pa-

pers case. But I believe that most participants (my source was Evan Thomas's biography of Edward Bennett Williams) agree that it was Williams's informal advice to Bradlee that prompted the paper to push ahead with publication.

Grazing Problems

I was very interested to read Perri Knize's article on ranching ("Winning the War for the West," July *Atlantic*). Like Knize, I am a native New Yorker and a journalist who transplanted herself to the West, in my case more than fifteen years ago. In fact, one of Knize's sources, a New Mexico environmentalist whom I knew slightly, asked me to call Knize while she was working on the piece, because he thought we had a few things in common. I realized partway into the phone call, and later confirmed, that his real reason for asking me to call her was his fear that she wasn't doing her homework. That was my impression too.

Knize writes that "many scientists who study what happens to land where cattle graze admit that no definitive case can be made."

Sorry, that's just wrong. A recent paper by A. J. Belsky, published in the *Journal of Soil and Water Conservation*, took a comprehensive view of the peer-reviewed literature on grazing's effect on riparian habitat. Belsky's conclusion was this: "An extensive literature search did not locate peer-reviewed empirical papers reporting a positive impact of cattle on riparian areas when those areas were compared to ungrazed controls." Belsky reports that some papers showed no effects of grazing, but "the authors of these papers usually explained this absence of statistically significant impacts as being due to stochastic or design problems associated with their research."

Belsky, who grew up in Abilene, Texas, but spent most of her career working on National Science Foundation grants in East Africa, says she bent over backward to find papers that showed positive effects of grazing. There were none. What she did find was that the environmental effects of grazing can be reduced with improved management but not eliminated.

Robert Ohmart, of the Center for Environmental Studies at Arizona State University, published a similar literature review in 1996, in a book called *Rangeland Wildlife*, published by the Society of Range Management, a group certainly not

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But let us take our cue from a party of scientists whom we once invited to explore the matter. 'Magic!' they exclaimed, swigging their drams in a most unboffinly manner. 'But magic is merely undiscovered science and we'd like to take some home *for further investigation.*'

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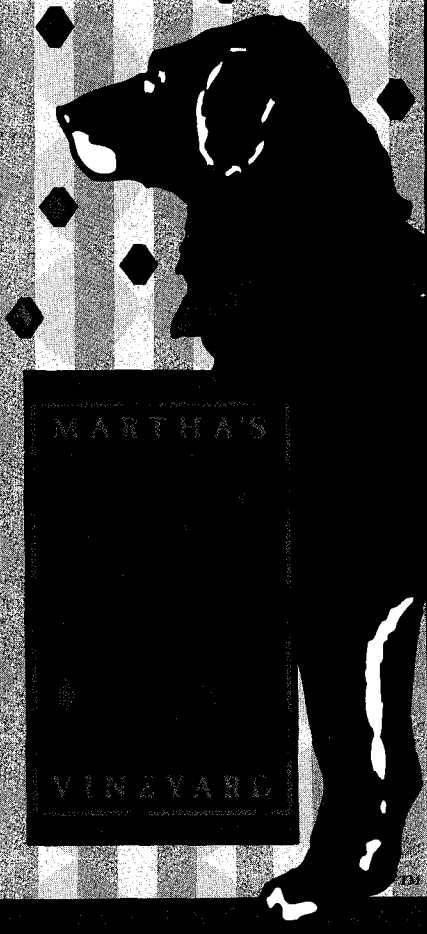
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known for its anti-ranching tendencies.

Ohmart's paper was narrower in scope, looking only at wildlife and fish, but inevitably it, too, focused on riparian habitat; 60 to 70 percent of Western bird species and perhaps 80 percent of wildlife species in Arizona, New Mexico, and southeastern Oregon are dependent on riparian habitats. Yet Ohmart's paper showed that in Arizona, at least, only two or three percent of the cottonwood-willow riparian association remains. That's 10,000 to 11,000 acres out of 260,000 acres of floodplain in the state of Arizona, which comprises 73 million acres of land. The effects on wildlife are about what you'd expect.

It's true that huge numbers of livestock and cataclysmic drought followed by severe rain damaged streams in the late 1800s. But according to Ohmart, these streams have been prevented from recovering by continued widespread grazing. Ohmart says that's why most of the cottonwoods you see along southwestern streams are old and decadent. Cattle have eaten so many young cottonwood and willow shoots over the past century that Ohmart predicts a crash in biodiversity in thirty to fifty years, when the last of the mature cottonwoods die out. And for Knize to say that all—or even most—ranchers use “ecosystem management” is plainly absurd.

Susan Zakin
Tucson, Ariz.

As a wildlife biologist who has worked on the public lands of the West, I found your recent article by Perri Knize to be full of errors and misrepresentations.

Knize glosses over the multiple impacts that livestock production has upon wildlife, and fails to note that both independent and government studies have identified livestock production as responsible for more endangered species in the West than any other human activity (such as logging, mining, and building subdivisions).

Though Knize continually asserts that “wildlife” benefits from livestock production, she usually fails to identify the species. And in the few instances when she does name specific animals, she refers mostly to elk, deer, and geese—all highly adaptable and relatively common animals that tend to flourish on human disturbance. Both deer and geese, in fact, thrive even in urban environments—which few biologists would identify as good wildlife habitat.

What Knize does not point out is that dozens of species, many of which were for-

merly widely distributed, are now on the verge of extinction or significantly reduced in numbers, largely as a consequence of livestock-induced habitat degradation, disease transmission from livestock, or persecution by ranchers. These include black-tailed prairie dogs, black-footed ferrets, sage grouse, bighorn sheep, wolves, grizzly bears, swift foxes, desert tortoises, Southwestern willow flycatchers, Bonneville cutthroat trout, and many others.

Mollie Matteson
Livingston, Mont.

Perri Knize did a great disservice to the hundreds of range, grassland, wildlife, and fisheries scientists who have spent their careers studying and publishing on the environmental effects of livestock grazing in the West. She is guilty of the same “half-truths, skewed facts, and outright fallacies” of which she accuses others. Let's look at the scientific evidence.

Although the federal range may, as she says, be “in better condition than it has been in more than a century,” it had no direction to go but up. Decades of uncontrolled grazing prior to the Taylor Grazing Act of 1934 converted hundreds of millions of acres in the West into denuded, eroding moonscapes. These rangelands have improved somewhat since the 1930s not because of better grazing practices but because of significant reductions in cattle and sheep grazing. This proves that any form of livestock management is better than none. It doesn't show that grazing is beneficial to grasslands and shrublands, or that it does not harm the environment.

Knize also wrote that cattle grazing improves wildlife habitat, because elk, deer, and antelope prefer the more succulent shoots that grow after plants are grazed by cattle. She ignores data showing that elk actively avoid areas grazed by cattle, that these plants are not adapted to heavy grazing and are damaged by multiple defoliations, and that the regrowth may be only 10 percent of the amount of the forage originally available to wildlife. She also fails to mention that elk, deer, and other wildlife managed just fine before cattle were introduced.

It is true that pronghorn have been declining at the Hart Mountain National Antelope Refuge, in Oregon, where cattle were removed in the early 1990s, but the trend is similar among pronghorn throughout the West, from New Mexico to Canada. Pronghorn experts speculate that the

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recent decline is due to adverse climatic conditions and to the degradation of sagebrush communities by a hundred years of livestock grazing.

Knize's conclusion that "modern livestock grazing has comparatively little environmental impact" is strongly and convincingly refuted by even the most cursory review of the scientific literature.

A. Joy Belsky

*Oregon Natural Desert Association
Portland, Oreg.*

Perri Knize replies:

I never stated that all or even most ranchers practice ecosystem management. But more ranchers are interested in it and practicing it all the time. The point is that livestock grazing can coexist harmoniously with native species, and many of the changes ranchers need to make are not difficult or expensive, just creative.

Yes, riparian areas have been badly damaged, but our understanding of the importance of riparian areas is relatively recent, and they easily and quickly recover with good management. Solid programs are now in place to reverse the damage, and they have been very successful. Nowhere have I been able to find a study that says riparian areas are in the worst condition in history. The scientists I asked about it find this statement highly improbable, especially in light of the dramatic drop in livestock numbers over the past fifty years and the vast improvements in management over the same period. These scientists believe that grazed uplands are in the best condition they have been in since the beginning of the century.

Susan Zakin, as a journalist, should take better care to check her sources. Some of the scientists whose work A. Joy Belsky cites in her *Journal of Soil and Water Conservation* paper disagree with her and say their work was taken out of context for the purpose of supporting what they consider to be a highly biased and unwarranted conclusion. Even the premise of Belsky's study is dubious: she compares grazed land with ungrazed land, something that is rare—if not nonexistent—in the United States.

I have in hand many, many peer-reviewed research papers that find not only that cattle and wildlife are compatible but that well-managed grazing is beneficial to many kinds of wildlife. For example, mountain plovers require highly disturbed land, which can be created by livestock grazing. Sage-grouse numbers were higher a generation ago, when there were more

cattle grazing in the birds' sagebrush-steppe habitat than there are today. Studies show that prairie dogs, bighorn sheep, sandhill cranes, and many other species benefit from well-managed livestock grazing. Raptors and other predators also benefit, because reduced cover makes it easier for them to find their prey.

As for Mollie Matteson's assertion that livestock are the single greatest threat to endangered species, a research paper published in volume 45, No. 7 of *Bioscience*, "Taxpayer-Subsidized Resource Extraction Harms Species," by Losos, Hayes, et al., states that livestock grazing is the third greatest threat to listed species—after water development and human recreation.

Belsky, who has written the tracts on which the anti-grazing activists most rely, has called her own scientific credibility into doubt with her absurd assertions that elk avoid cattle, that range plants are not adapted to heavy grazing, and that regrowth is dramatically less than the forage that was "originally" there. An abundance of data show that elk prefer cattle pasture. In fact, some wildlife-management areas use cattle to prepare pasture for elk. Anyone who lives in Montana or Wyoming has seen elk herds grazing in the same pasture with cattle. The elk population is exploding, and most of those animals winter on private ranchlands. That is why all western states have programs to assist ranchers in keeping their lands open to hunters.

Range plants are absolutely adapted to multiple defoliations. Before white settlement the range was heavily grazed and trampled by 10 to 60 million bison; in some parts of the West the prairie was ground into dust, and the first trappers' horses starved for lack of grass. The wallows of these bison still pockmark the landscape today.

As to the welfare of elk and deer before white settlement, we know that the Shoshone Indians were starving in Idaho when Lewis and Clark arrived because of a lack of wild game—probably owing to a population crash, part of the natural cycle. We have more of these game animals right now than at any time since European settlement of the West began. In fact, one of the most degraded riparian areas in the country is the Lamar River Valley, in Yellowstone National Park, where elk—not cattle—have eaten almost all the willows in the riparian areas. There never has been any magic "balance of nature." Nature is a place of extremes; species proliferate and then diminish. What is natural is a boom-and-bust cycle.



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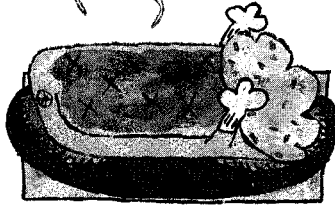


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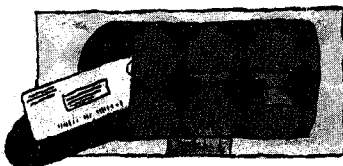


Food

Turkey sales peak this month; so do sales of vegetarian alternatives, such as tofu and wheat-based "turkeys." It is estimated that more than 170,000 meatless turkeys will be consumed on Thanksgiving. The market for such items has recently soared: one manufacturer, for example, has seen sales double each year since 1992. The rise is due in part to the growing popularity of soy products, increasingly prized for their health value, and in part to sentiment (many who shun meat are nostalgic nonetheless for traditional holiday foods). Producers have come up with a number of tactics to make these products resemble real turkeys. One brand is molded into the shape of a bird; another has a covering that turns dark and crispy when baked, like turkey skin; yet another has a tofu-jerky wishbone inside.

Demographics

November starts the busy season for college applications. Admissions officers may still be recovering from last season, which saw the highest volume in the nation's history. The peak resulted from the number of high school seniors, members of the so-called Baby Boomlet (it is estimated that 2.8 million graduated this year, close to the record 3.2 million in 1977), coupled with the high proportion who set out to attend college (67 percent today, as compared with 50 percent in 1977). In recent years the process has been heating up earlier than usual, partly be-



cause of the growing popularity of early-action options, especially at top-rated schools: for example, in 1998 Harvard University accepted nearly half of its incoming class by early action. The Internet has also increased applications activity: students have begun adding multimedia components to their applications, electronic services have reduced the cost and work of applying to several schools at once, and some colleges let students confirm the receipt of their applications online. However, one rite remains sacred: acceptance and rejection letters still arrive by regular mail.



Arts & Letters

The American artist Norman Rockwell—long scorned by critics as sentimental and a mere "illustrator," and omitted from many art-history texts—gains an important measure of respectability in the art world this month with the opening of the most comprehensive exhibit ever of his work. "Norman Rockwell: Pictures for the American People" starts a nationwide tour at the High Museum of Art, in Atlanta, on November 6; it will travel to Chicago; Washington, D.C.; San Diego; Phoenix; Stockbridge, Massachusetts; and New York City. The exhibit contains more than 70 oil paintings and all 322 of Rockwell's covers for *The Saturday Evening Post*. It pairs the nostalgic pictures for which Rockwell is famous with lesser-known works relating to complex social developments—for example, the civil-rights movement—and also contains sketches and other items that document his meticulous methods. Its catalogue will include critical essays about Rockwell—the first time such a collection has been published.

Government

November 1: As of today the four major networks and their affiliates must begin high-definition digital broadcasting in the nation's top 30 television markets. This is the second phase of a Federal Communications Commission mandate that will eliminate traditional, analog broadcasting by 2007. (The first phase, implemented in May, required the addition of digital formats in the top 10 TV markets.) The switch not only is big business—high-definition TVs typically cost between \$4,000 and \$10,000—but also has medical implications. Last year about a dozen heart monitors at Baylor University Medical Center malfunctioned when a Dallas TV station tested the high-definition technology over the same broadcasting band used by the hospital (no patients were harmed). During the transition years, when stations will be broadcasting in both formats, there will be fewer frequencies available to hospitals—which bear the responsibility for steering clear.



The Skies

November 6: Saturn reaches opposition—it is on the other side of Earth from the Sun—and is at its brightest in more than 20 years. **13:** The crescent Moon hangs just above Mars in the southwest at dusk. **17–18:** The Leonid meteor shower peaks tonight. Though notoriously unpredictable, the shower may bear watching this year: many believe that this might be the last chance in several decades for a spectacular display. **23:** Full Moon, also known this month as the Frosty or Beaver Moon or the Moon When the Bucks Lose Their Horns.



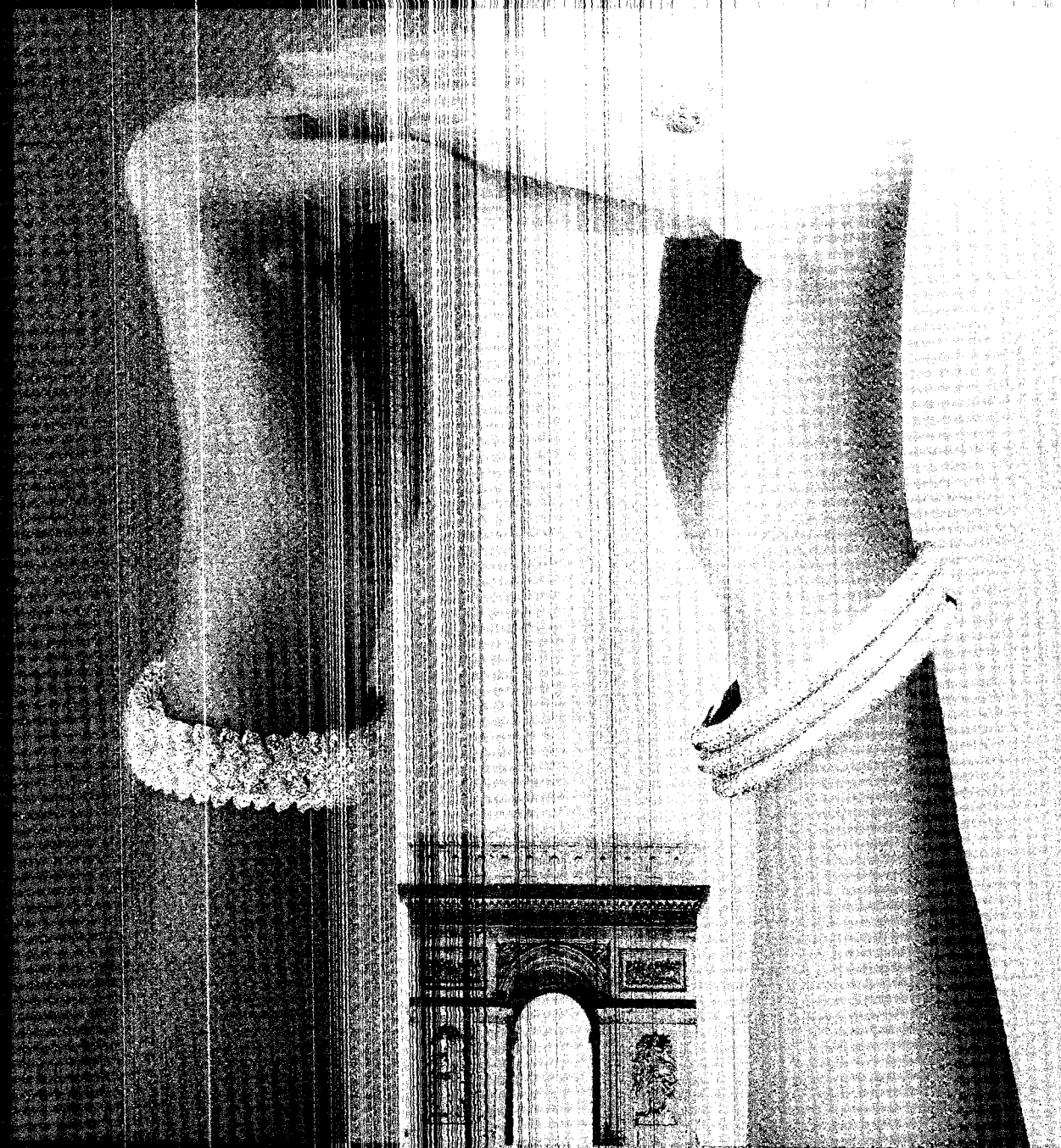
Health & Safety

November 18: The Great American Smokeout, on which day the American Cancer Society urges smokers to refrain. They may do so at some peril: British researchers who reviewed 10 years' worth of statistics found a rise in workplace accidents on Britain's No Smoking Day (the second Wednesday in March). They attributed the accidents to deficits in concentration and coordination from nicotine withdrawal, and recommended that abstainers take other forms of nicotine on such days.

50 Years Ago

Bertrand Russell, writing in the November, 1949, issue of *The Atlantic Monthly*: "The savage . . . lived a life in which his initiative was not too much hampered by the community. The things that he wanted to do, usually hunting and war, were also the things that his neighbors wanted to do, and if he felt an inclination to become a medicine man he only had to ingratiate himself with some individual already eminent in that profession. . . . The modern man lives a very different life. If he sings in the street he will be thought to be drunk, and if he dances a policeman will reprove him for impeding the traffic. His working day, unless he is exceptionally fortunate, is occupied in a completely monotonous manner. . . . When his work is over, he cannot, like Milton's Shepherd, 'tell his tale under the hawthorn in the dale,' because there is often no dale anywhere near where he lives, or, if there is, it is full of tins."





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Factor Analysis

*A newly pervasive linguistic trope
raises a question: Have we stumbled on the basic
unit of social causality?*

POLITICAL commentators assessing the prospects for Al Gore in his race for the presidency and Hillary Rodham Clinton in her presumptive race for the United States Senate have in recent months drawn attention to a phenomenon that could dampen public enthusiasm for both candidates: "Clinton-fatigue factor." The columnist Bob Herbert, writing in *The New York Times* about Hillary Clinton's campaign, defined Clinton-fatigue factor succinctly: "A lot of voters have had their fill of Bill and Hillary and would like to move on."

Clinton-fatigue factor may be a palpable reality, but it is by no means the only factor that has been enjoying prominence in the news. Last spring Steven Spielberg's relatively modest showing at the Academy Awards—his *Saving Private Ryan* received eleven nominations but won only five Oscars—was attributed by an industry observer to a combination of the "Him again? factor" and the "What more does he need? factor." In Hollywood, according to one publication, the essential component of star quality is the "'it' factor"; modeling agencies, the same source says, are looking for a very different component—the "X-factor." The movie *The Mummy*, a *Los Angeles Times* critic decided, was given momentum by the "squirm factor." *Armageddon* succeeded because of the "testosterone factor."

Economists, I notice, have been calling attention to a "feel-good factor" that has bolstered consumer confidence and prepared the way for a "drool factor," lubricating retail sales. The "spinach factor" refers to a potentially off-putting amount of actual substance in something intended for mass-market entertainment; of course, the "dreck factor" can also prove off-putting. People will often sit and stare anyway, media analysts observe, owing to the "If it's on, watch it factor."

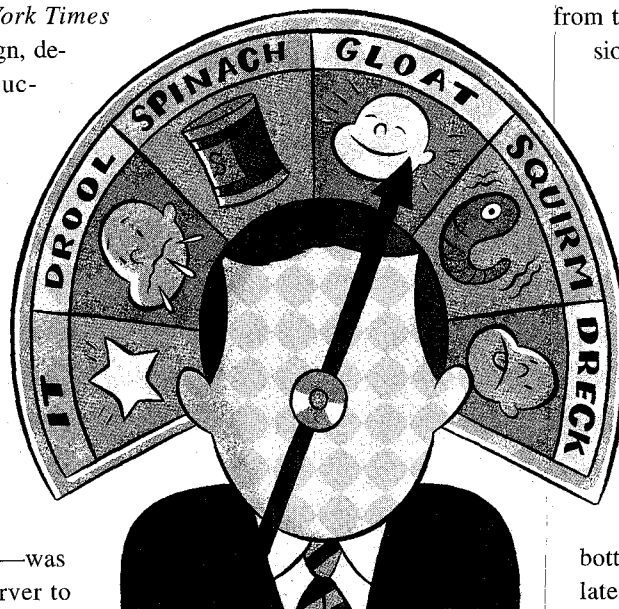
Bill Clinton figures again in the "It could be me factor"—cited by a writer in *Time* to explain the public's reluctance to judge the President's personal behavior harshly. Clinton-fatigue factor aside, Al Gore is said by the columnist David Broder to have benefited from the "G factor"—that is, becoming a grand-

father—even as George W. Bush draws strength from the "inevitability factor." An aversion to public discussion of distasteful subjects is brought on by the "yuck factor." The attraction of journalists to predictions of doom originates with the "Chicken Little factor." Having survived the yuck factor and the Chicken Little factor, the Clinton Administration has been advised by political operatives to beware of the "gloat factor."

Pick a phenomenon and some sort of factor will almost always be found at the bottom of it. Hundreds have been isolated and identified in recent years. It used to be that explanations for com-

plex behavioral outcomes were amorphous and murky—insights to be approached by means of the hunch, the gut feeling, the surmise. These crude tools are now things of the past, replaced by new instruments of refinement and power.

All this needs to be seen against a larger backdrop. In his book *The End of Science* the writer John Horgan makes the audacious claim that human understanding has closed in on all the big verifiable truths about the universe and how it works: the Big Bang, the theory of relativity, the forces governing matter, the fact of evolution, the mechanism of genetics. The sad truth, Horgan argues, is that "the great era of scientific discovery is over." Although a number of significant questions do remain unanswered (What is consciousness? Why did life begin?), the answers are necessarily speculative and therefore beyond the proper realm of science.



by Cullen Murphy



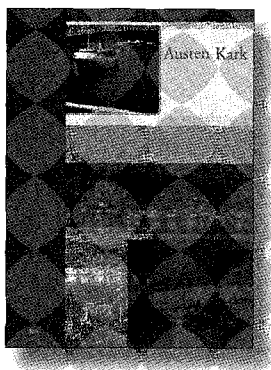
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For purely scientific questions the task ahead has been reduced to filling in the details. Horgan states, "Further research may yield no more great revelations or revolutions, but only incremental, diminishing returns."

I don't know if Horgan is right about the natural sciences; his book has aroused a certain amount of derision. But the situation he describes stands in contrast to the one prevailing in the social sciences. There the great era of scientific discovery has scarcely begun. Specific insights have been piling up for a century or more, unaccompanied by the emergence of an overarching theory.

The insights have occasionally been stunning, to be sure. In Norway psychologists recently demonstrated that people afflicted with a "negative mood" tend to be more adept at creative problem-solving than people blessed with a happier temperament—research that perhaps explains the technological superiority of the world's wet and chilly regions. Another example: last spring behavioral scientists at the University of Illinois College of Medicine and the Smell and Taste Treatment and Research Foundation, in Chicago, reported a correlation between the act of lying and an itch-producing engorgement of erectile tissue inside the nose—a correlation, they say, that may support "using frequency of proboscis manipulation as an indicator of mendacity."

For the most part, though, reports of new social-science findings suggest a tentative groping toward the mundane. A study released not long ago by the New York-based research firm Public Agenda found that most adults were skeptical that the nation's teenagers would ever mature into responsible Americans. Psychologists at the National Institute for Healthcare Research have publicized an investigation of couples showing that when one member has indulged in hurtful behavior, the subsequent apology-forgiveness dynamic plays out most successfully if the couple's relationship is "close, committed, and satisfactory." Newspaper headlines, summarizing the latest research, offer minimalist validations of what one never had much cause to doubt: "INFIDELITY COMMON AMONG BIRDS AND MAMMALS, EXPERTS SAY." "STUDY SUGGESTS VALUES OF HOLLYWOOD'S ELITE MAY NOT REFLECT PUBLIC'S." "DEFINING JUST HOW OLD IS OLD VARIES WITH AGE OF THOSE ASKED."

"ANXIOUS MEN RISK HYPERTENSION."
"NEW YORK FIRMS CALLED PRICEY, ARROGANT."

These may be solid little bricks in the edifice of understanding, but the structure they define has not grown very imposing.

Until recently. As noted, the accelerating interest in factors holds out the promise of something larger. In some guise the idea of the factor has, of course, been around for decades, in phrases like "human factor" and "risk factor" and "deciding factor." Now it seems to be emerging as the basic unit of social and behavioral causality. Is it premature to hope that factors will do for the social sciences what genes have done for the study of heredity and "memes" are doing for the study of cultural evolution? Tellingly, the gene itself, when first postulated in the early years of this century, was given the name "factor."

The task of mapping the human genome, under the auspices of the Human Genome Project and other groups, is nearly complete. A Social Factor Project, comparable in scope, would be a worthy successor to that enterprise. I have run this proposal by the biologists Stephen Jay Gould and E. O. Wilson, the physicists Murray Gell-Mann and Stephen Hawking, and the senator and social thinker Daniel Patrick Moynihan, and have received not the slightest sign of discouragement (or, indeed, any personal response). Meanwhile, I have begun parceling out chunks of the work to interested parties. The results, gleaned from ordinary newspapers and magazines, are coming in faster than expected. One day brings discovery of a "feng-shui factor," the next of a "kilt-movie factor." Those feelings of annoyance at the sight of someone talking on a cell phone in public? According to a recent news report, telephone-company executives have pinpointed the culprit: the "yuppie-scum factor."

Critics will charge that factor analysis is overly reductionist. Some will fret about disturbing uses to which our new knowledge may be put. Ideological disputes are likely. All these are a normal part of any discipline's development, and no cause for alarm. The next step is federal funding. An e-mail from Senator Moynihan's office said that my views were welcome. Whether the proboscis-manipulation factor was at work could not be determined. ☼



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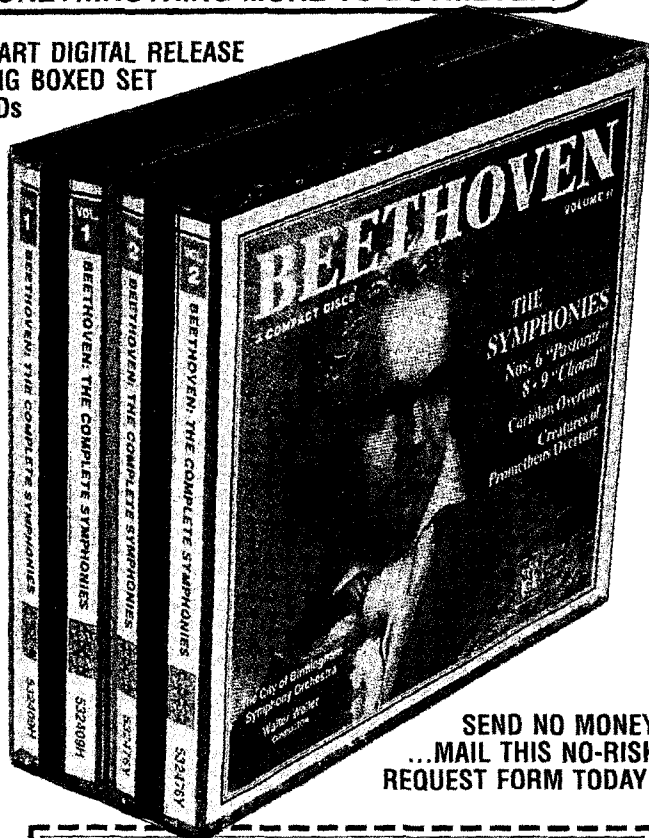
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DOUG CORRANCE

Did Braveheart Die for Devolution?

*Scottish independence is in the air,
and it may well stay there, masking the facts
of English domination*

LAST May, following a referendum to confirm that they wanted devolution, the people of Scotland elected a Parliament for the first time in nearly 300 years. Scotland is not yet an independent nation once more, but it has a legislature and an executive responsible for some of the country's internal governance.

As I traveled around Scotland last summer, there was no mistaking the new mood—a mood of laid-back liberalization as much as of national assertion. When I first knew Scotland, as a visitor from England more than thirty years ago, the country had a well-justified reputation for Calvinist dourness. The difficulty of finding an edible meal or getting a drink outside sharply restricted hours—even during the Edinburgh Festival—was no-

torious. And despite that festival the country seemed culturally torpid.

All that has changed, for both worse and better. The land of “kailyard” literature—couthie hearth-and-home tales of the late nineteenth century—is now the country of *Trainspotting*, that compulsively harrowing novel and movie about junkie life. Even distant and dignified Inverness, the capital of the Highlands, shakes with music from pubs and clubs on Saturday night; both Edinburgh and Glasgow are transformed since I first knew them.

To take two curious kinds of transformation, one church after another in both cities has become a theater or a concert hall, and scores of mighty Victorian banks have been turned into bars. The huge Glasgow office of the Scottish Pruden-

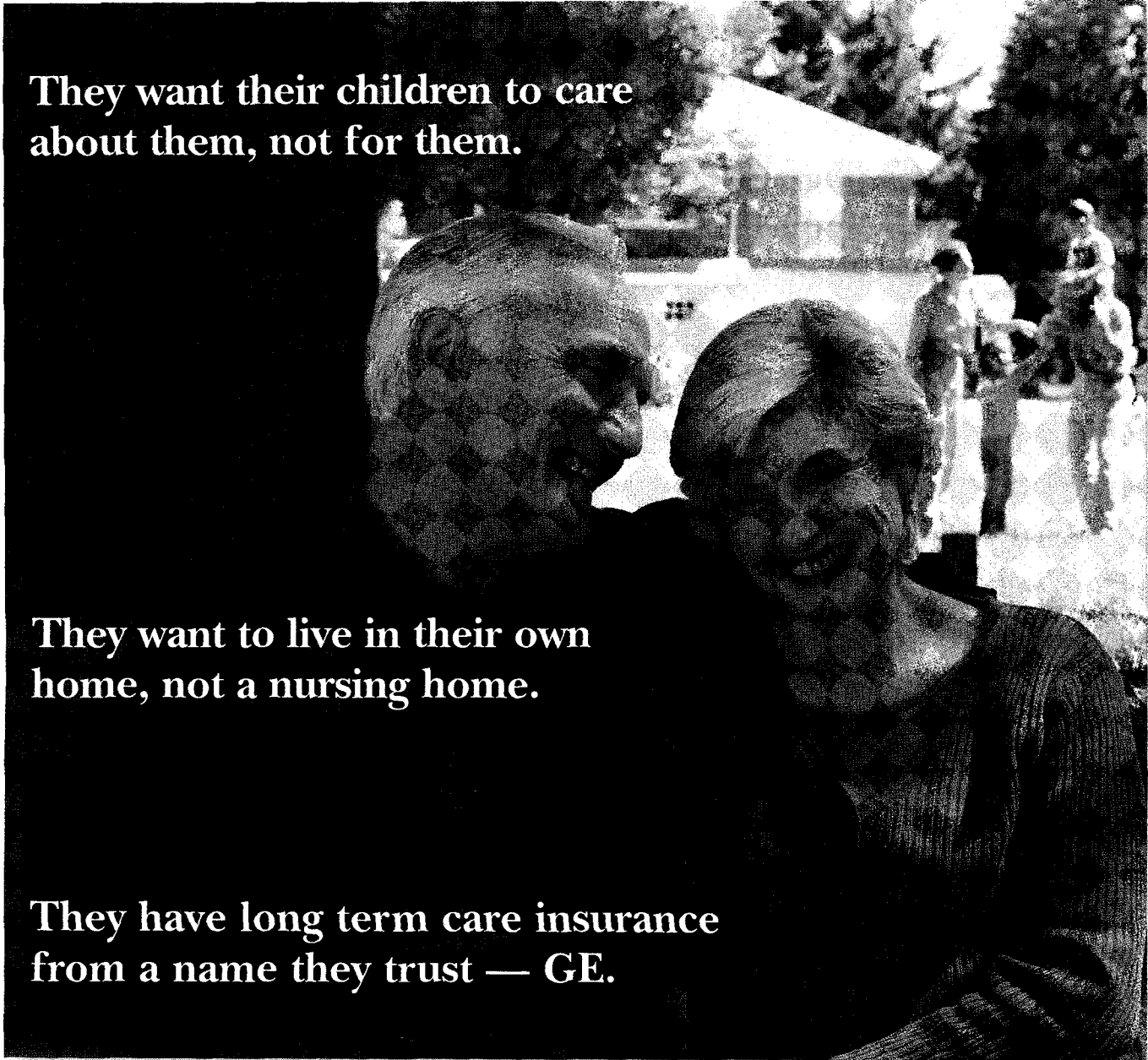
tial Institution is now a pub fatuously named the Slug and Lettuce. One handsome Edinburgh kirk has become the Queen's Hall, where I listened to Beethoven and Schumann rather than the Scottish metrical psalms that were once chanted there. And in Glasgow the famous Ramshorn Kirk, boyhood parish church of Sir John Macdonald, who became the first Prime Minister of Canada, is now a theater. I wondered what John Knox or John Macdonald would have made of the kirk several months ago, when David Mamet's *Sexual Perversity in Chicago* was playing there.

A ludicrous episode this spring said something about the changing face of Scotland. Intent on entering the American financial market, the Bank of Scotland decided that the really smart way to do this would be in partnership with the television evangelist Pat Robertson. That itself said something about the brilliant minds that run our great financial institutions—apparently, the reasoning was that Robertson's U.S.-based Christian Broadcasting Network reaches as many as 50 million viewers.

All seemed to go well until Robertson, during one of his broadcasts, launched a savage attack on Scotland as a “dark land”: “In Scotland you can't believe how strong the homosexuals are.” What had vexed the preacher man? It's true that some call one section of Glasgow “Glasgay,” but I doubt that Robertson has spent much time there. Was it something about the kilt? Or the scene in that idiotic movie *Braveheart* where William Wallace's Highland soldiers taunt the English by baring their buttocks? At any rate, a mixture of liberalism and patriotism caused a storm of protest in Scotland. The deal fell through, and the Bank of Scotland may have to pay Robertson up to \$50 million in compensation.

IT is nearly 300 years since the sovereign kingdom of Scotland was extinguished. Since they emerged onto the pages of history, Scotland and England

Spectators dressed in Highland garb for the Cowal Highland Games, at Dunoon, cast an eye on material at a Scottish National Party information booth



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had shared the island of Great Britain as separate countries, often at war. With the "Union of the Crowns," in 1603, King James VI of Scotland inherited the crown of England as James I. For the next century the stories of the two countries were more closely intermingled than ever, during the turbulent wars—political, social, religious, and dynastic all at once—that wracked and remade the British Isles.

Then, in January of 1707, the Scottish Parliament voted itself out of existence. As the Earl of Seafield said, "There's an end of ane auld sang." Scotland and England became Great Britain. The Union was accomplished in Scotland through gross bribery and corruption, but there were good reasons for it: Scotland was nearly bankrupt. And it was frightened—as much as anything, the Union was a defense against Jacobitism, the threat from the exiled Catholic Stuarts.

The Union of Scotland and England worked. And until recently its success seemed unchallengeable. To be sure, for more than a century after the Union, political life was practically dead within Scotland. The country was one huge "rotten borough": in 1790 the members of Parliament sent by all the counties of Scotland together were elected by a total of 2,655 voters.

But the eighteenth century also saw the

A children's play group learns Scottish Gaelic vocabulary. Restoration of the language to vitality is a nationalist dream—pipe dream, most say

Scottish Enlightenment. It was one of those wonderful freaks of history when in a short time a small society—Periclean Athens, Quattrocento Italy, Elizabethan England, the European Jews in the century after emancipation—produces a fabulous flowering of creativity. In Scotland it meant David Hume, Adam Smith, Henry Raeburn, Robert Adam, and Walter Scott—names to rank with anyone's in Europe at that time; names that are at a discount in Scotland today.

Then, in the nineteenth century, Scotland became a great industrial country. Glasgow was "the Second City of the Empire," where many of the British Empire's ships were built on Clydeside. After Bonnie Prince Charlie's disastrous rebellion, in 1745–1746, the Highland tradition was broken; in the early decades of the nineteenth century the Highlands were brutally cleared of their crofters to make room for sheep. The Highlanders fled to Glasgow, and many of them continued onward to North America or Australasia.

All of this gave modern Scotland its character, with a densely populated central belt of industrial cities between huge hinterlands of mountains and moors, the whole closely integrated into the British economy and ruled from London. And for a long time Scotland seemed contented with that dispensation, the Union and all. As recently as the 1955 general election a majority of Scottish MPs returned were Tories (or "Unionists").

It seems another century. From that majority of seats in 1955 the Tory vote declined over forty-two years—to the

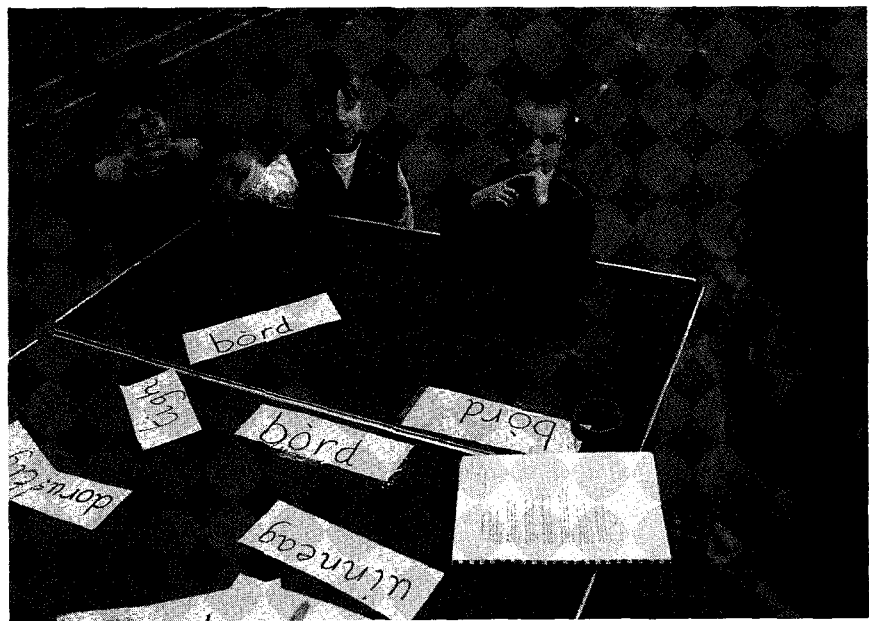
point where not a single Tory MP was elected from Scotland in the 1997 election. Scotland became a Labour redoubt. Labour controlled almost all the municipal authorities in the urban lowlands—a great, sprawling, one-party statelet. The Labour MPs that Scotland sent to Westminster were crucial to any Labour ambitions for parliamentary power, and Scottish politics therefore elicited considerable attention in Labour councils.

Scotland is to have its Parliament, but it will continue to send a grossly inflated number of MPs to Westminster.

THE story of devolution begins in 1967. A book could be written about the influence of by-elections on British politics. These are held between general elections on occasions when, as a cynical political journalist I know used to say, a sitting member of Parliament takes a highly paid job in Brussels, goes to jail, or dies of cirrhosis of the liver.

Sometimes these by-elections are upsets for the governing party, as the voters express midterm discontent. Often the seat will revert to its previous allegiance at the next general election—but not before the upset has altered the pattern of politics. One famous case was the East Fulham by-election of 1933, which persuaded Stanley Baldwin (Prime Minister before and after) that the British people had no stomach for re-armament and resisting Hitler.

Looming large in Scotland's modern history is the 1967 by-election at Hamilton, in the Clyde Valley southeast of Glasgow. Winifred Ewing startled the political establishment, and terrified Harold Wilson's Labour government, by taking that seat for the Scottish National Party, which was founded in 1934 as a union of the National Party of Scotland and the Scottish Party. Until then the SNP had been seen as a joke in London. Originally a cranky fringe party of romantic reactionaries (though it later acquired a socialist tinge), the SNP had won all of 21,738 votes throughout Scotland in the



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1959 general election. Winnie Ewing's success was an astonishing portent.

It was said of Baldwin that the nerve damaged by East Fulham "never quite healed"; and the Labour Party has never been the same since Hamilton. Labour still won forty-four out of seventy-one Scottish seats in the 1970 general election. But in the 1970s there was another SNP upsurge. In 1970 the party's vote was 306,802; by 1974 it had risen to 839,617, and the "Scot Nats" won eleven seats.

*Sean Connery jets in to
wave the Scottish
National Party's flag,
to a mixture of adula-
tion and derision.*

Everything that has happened subsequently must be seen as a desperate reaction by Labour to this threat: an attempt to square the circle, giving Scotland enough sops to stave off the Nationalists while keeping it in the Union so that—the all-important part—Labour can retain its four dozen or so pocket boroughs in Scotland. As it happens, Tony Blair did win a majority of English seats in 1997, but this was a feat that only two previous Labour leaders have managed (Clement Attlee in 1945 and Wilson in 1966), as Blair is acutely conscious.

During the Labour government of 1974–1979 the first serious attempt was made to give devolved government to Scotland. This was put to a referendum in 1979, and the Scots voted for a Parliament of their own, but in insufficient numbers to pass the electoral threshold that had been set. In the wake of this failure the Labour government of James Callaghan fell, ushering in eighteen years of Tory rule under Margaret Thatcher and John Major.

"Thatcherism" was profoundly at odds with the statist, welfarist political culture of Scotland. Mrs. Thatcher tried to persuade the Scots that they were natural free-marketeers, the people of Adam Smith, notably in her didactic "Sermon on the Mound," delivered to the Church of Scotland in May of 1988; but this scolding only increased their disaffection.

Tony Blair's platform included devolution, which he had inherited from his predecessor. But the truth is that Labour was a belated and half-hearted convert to this cause. Labour was traditionally a British centralist party, for the good reason that it was a socialist and redistributive party that believed in shifting wealth not only from richer to poorer individuals but also from richer to poorer regions—from the prosperous south of England to the north and, especially, to the "Celtic fringe," Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland.

At the time of the Union, and for long after, the balance of government taxing and spending was not in Scotland's favor. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries state spending was, of course, exiguous by today's standards. Over the past century, in contrast, the Scots (and the Welsh, and the Northern Irish) have done well from that balance. And they still do.

The figures are truly remarkable. Spending rates are fixed under the "Scottish block," or the "Barnett formula" (named after a Finance Minister). This ensures that, in broad terms and on average, every resident of Scotland receives £1.25 of state spending for each £1 that every resident of England receives. Put another way, the southeast of England puts in £114 per head for each £76 received, a net transfer of -£38, while Scotland puts in £99 and receives £120, a transfer of +£21.

This makes the Scottish demand for autonomy seem curious—to the English, at least. The Nationalist position is at any rate honest. The party wants complete separation from England, with the acceptance of financial responsibility that implies (though the Nationalists look longingly at independent Ireland, whose economy has been transformed in the past twenty years by very large sums of money injected from the European Union).

Labour's position has no such honesty. More than twenty years ago its central flaw was identified as "the West Lothian Question" by Tam Dalyell, a veteran Labour MP, a foe of devolution, and one of the true adornments of British politics in the past generation. He has sat at Westminster since 1962 for the constituency west of Edinburgh, which fidgety bureaucrats have renamed Linlithgow, but which used to be called West Lothian, and his Question is this: In the event that devolution came to pass, and Scotland established its own Parliament, how should it

be that he, as a Westminster MP, could vote in Parliament on the domestic affairs of West Bromwich, in the English Midlands, but not those of West Lothian, which he was meant to represent?

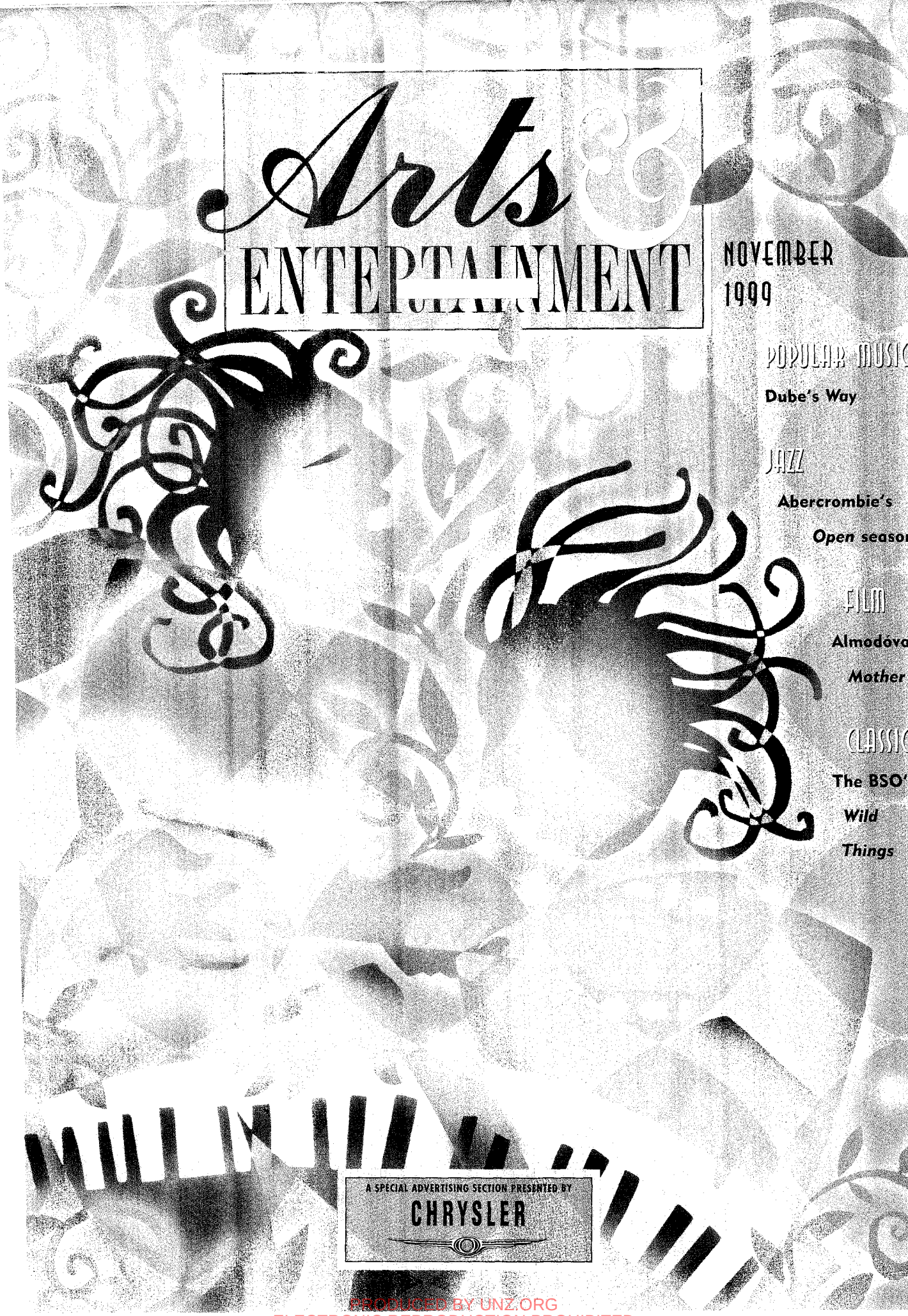
The Question is particularly sharp because Scotland is so heavily overrepresented in the Westminster Parliament in proportion to its population. There are seventy-two Scottish MPs, whereas for parity with England there should be more like fifty-eight. After devolution there should in equity be fewer still. At the time of the debates over home rule for Ireland, a century ago, it was accepted that once there was a Parliament in Dublin, the Irish would send fewer MPs per head to Westminster than the English (and the Scots) sent. This principle was embodied in the Home Rule Bills of 1893 and 1912 and in the 1920 act by which Northern Ireland continued to send MPs, but in reduced numbers, to Westminster after the Stormont statelet had been created to rule Northern Ireland. That is, incidentally, the one British experiment in devolved government so far this century, and a thoroughly unhappy one.

LITTLE as he likes the redistributive socialism of old Labour, Tony Blair is himself deeply antipathetic to devolution, not to say to Scotland itself. It was on a visit there before he was Prime Minister that he looked with distaste upon a group of journalists he considered to be old Labour apologists and asked, in a stage aside, "Who are these unreconstructed wankers?" In a phrase almost more insulting to the Scots than that eloquent vulgarity he said, when asked about the proposed Edinburgh Parliament, that it would have little more power than an "English parish council."

This was meant to be dismissive or even offensive, but in a technical sense it is true. The United Kingdom is not a federation and is not about to become one. Westminster may graciously cede power to the Edinburgh assembly, to city councils, and to parish councils, but sovereignty still resides ultimately in "the Crown in Parliament." The Scottish Parliament has nothing like the authority of the state government of Massachusetts or Illinois, in practice or in theory.

But there is a deal, and what it comes down to is breathtaking in its impudence. Scotland is to have its Parliament and ex-

(Continued on page 32)



Arts & ENTERTAINMENT

NOVEMBER
1999

POPULAR MUSIC

Dube's Way

JAZZ

Abercrombie's

Open season

FILM

Almodóvar's

Mother

CLASSICAL

The BSO's

*Wild
Things*

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Popular Music and Jazz

BY BOB BLUMENTHAL AND CHARLES M. YOUNG

WINDY CITY POSTMODERN

There is an iconoclasm to Patricia Barber's music that extends beyond sound and substance. She composes melodies filled with odd time signatures and hypnotic patterns suggesting minimalism, and writes literate lyrics that are mordant and bluntly poetic, while her stark and often contemplative vocals are set against a piano style suffused with complex ideas and advanced harmonies. Barber has also been a committed homebody who has worked primarily around Chicago since 1984 (with time out for a postgraduate degree from Northwestern) and recorded two heralded albums for the local Premonition Records rather than submit to major-label marketing strategies. The big time has finally come calling,

and it is characteristic of Barber that, rather than abandoning her independent base outright, she has entered with Premonition into the first distribution effort ever undertaken by the legendary Blue Note imprint. To celebrate the merger, a live "extended play" collection called *Companion* was taped in July at her regular haunt, Chicago's Green Mill. It is a fitting sampler of Barber's intelligence, wit, and command of an audience, with three typically left-field cover tunes (a dryly infectious "The Beat Goes On," a ceremonial "Black Magic Woman," and the if-you-dare "Use Me") and a like number of originals that skewer current fixations with exhibiting the right attitude and owning the right accoutrements. Blue Note is also putting Barber's previous discs into wider circulation, and *Companion* should whet appetites for last year's excellent and lengthier *Modern Cool*, featuring the chilling original ballad "Silent Partner" and a brilliant setting of the e. e. cummings poem "Love, put on your faces."

—B.B.

Bob Blumenthal is a jazz critic for The Boston Globe. Charles M. Young reviews music for Playboy, Allmusic.com, and other publications.



Kind of Blue: Barber

JIMMY KATZ

GET UP, STAND UP

The greatest reggae singers—Bob Marley, Jimmy Cliff—tend to be tenors with a touch of sandpaper in their vocal cords. The slightly rough edge creates an impression of innocent sincerity and boyish vulnerability that can come close to melodrama when the lyrics get to yearning for love and/or justice. Lucky Dube, a handsome South African with Marley-level charisma, which is to say his charisma cup runneth over, extends and expands this tradition with *The Way It Is* (Shanachie), an album of shimmering melodic beauty and fiercely persuasive political declamation. Imagine Sam Cooke singing the Book of Jeremiah with a little advice for the romantically challenged tossed in for seasoning. Dube, who used to denounce the apartheid government

of South Africa, now denounces the present government in "Crime and Corruption," a proper jeremiad about the formerly oppressed becoming the oppressor. His vision of his homeland is by no means dreary, however.

In "Let the Band Play On" he sings about the police arriving halfway through a wonderful party. The neighbors have complained that the music isn't loud enough, so the police demand that the band turn up. Now, that's an enlightened society, even if there is a lot of crime and corruption. Dube's delightful sense of humor also shows up in the liner notes, in which he

The way he is:
Lucky Dube

mocks the grandiosity and greed of show business by claiming that he's done everything on the album himself and that the backup musicians have paid him money just to be listed on it. Righteous politics, sing-along melodies, and some major-league laughs—that's the way *The Way It Is* is and ought to be. —C.M.Y.



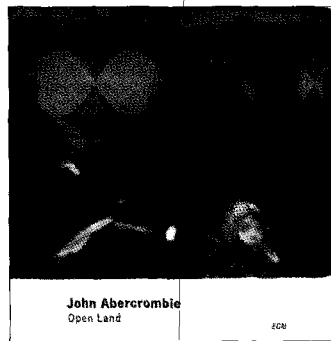
DOUBLE TRIPLE PLAY

For the past decade the guitarist John Abercrombie has been demonstrating an alternative approach to the ensemble known in the jazz world as the organ trio. He has done it with his own acerbic, constantly surprising solos and compositions, the equally cliché-free organ and writing of Dan Wall, and the channeled explosions of the drummer Adam Nussbaum. After three excellent trio albums they are joined by three guests on *Open Land* (ECM), and the program of eight Abercrombie originals and one collective improvisation is a marvel of gently twisted lyricism. The trio once again creates a quizzical, often otherworldly blend that brings the guests right into their inimitable atmosphere. The tenor saxophonist Joe Lovano, whose steely embellishments

elevate the ballad "Spring Song," is the most familiar new voice, although the less-celebrated Mark Feldman and Kenny Wheeler are certainly in synch with Abercrombie's methods. Feldman is a violinist and one of the most ver-

satile improvisers on any instrument, and he proves equally persuasive stretching the hazy boundaries of the title track and calling on his years in Nashville on "That's for Sure." A Canadian-born, London-based poet of the trumpet and flugelhorn, Wheeler is at his most eloquent on "Speak Easy." He is another

long-standing, always imaginative ECM artist, and his own new CD, *A Long Time Ago*, spotlights his writing and playing in the unprecedented setting of a flugelhorn/piano/guitar trio surrounded by an eight-piece brass choir. —B.B.

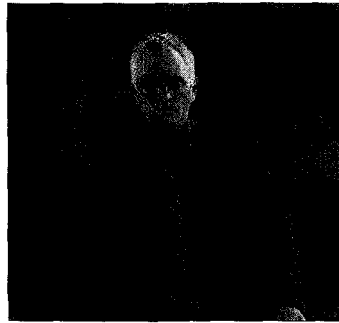
John Abercrombie
Open Land

Film

BY ELLA TAYLOR

PULP DICTION

Success has sent Steven Soderbergh scampering back to his roots in low-budget film. Following the critical and box-office triumph of his smooth Hollywood romantic adventure, *Out of Sight*, Soderbergh has applied his monster talent to *The Limey*, an action picture with enough noise and gore to sate the twelve-year-old boys who make up Hollywood's prime audience these days, and a sharp but wistful critique of the myth of "the sixties" that should make their aging Boomer parents sit up straight. Soderbergh seizes on Terence Stamp's congenitally stiff acting to create his ambiguous anti-hero Wilson, a British ex-con much given to overdone vernacular ("Oo dunnit, then? 'Oo snuffed 'er?"), who arrives in



How Now Poor Cow: Stamp

L.A. to avenge the apparent murder of his daughter, an aspiring actress. There he takes on some shady music-business moguls, including a disillusioned former hippie played by Peter Fonda.

Like *Out of Sight*, *The Limey* toys with time and memory, advancing the plot as much by looking back as by pushing forward. Soderbergh may be the most referential of filmmakers (Wilson's past is evoked through clips from Stamp's performance in the 1967 Ken Loach film *Poor Cow*), but he's also a philosopher who uses the cheerfully chintzy production values of his genre to ponder soulfully on the callow cruelties of the entertainment industry, the fall of a generation of idealists, and, as always, the treacherous unreliability of language.

CRUEL TO BE KIND

Red Riding Hood meets a wolf in sheep's clothing in Atom Egoyan's cool, well-crafted adaptation of the Irish writer William Trevor's recent novel *Felicia's Journey*. Joseph Hilditch (Bob Hoskins), a middle-aged bachelor and persnickety catering supervisor in Birmingham, England, remains in every sense in thrall to his mother (Arsinée Khanjian), a glamorous television chef. Felicia (Elaine Cassidy), a sweet young Irish girl, is wedded to a romantic fantasy that has brought her to town, against her autocratic father's wishes, to search for the boyfriend who told her he worked in a lawnmower factory. The two have much in common: parental folly, illusions, and an old-fashionedness that keeps both on the margins of society. They meet by chance, re-meet by Joseph's design, and forge a relationship that seems benign enough until it

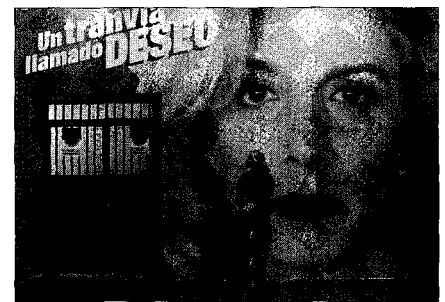
Cassidy and Hoskins cook up trouble



unfolds into creepiness, as we learn more about the rituals Joseph has cultivated to mask the pain he suffered as the fat, lonely child of an indifferent mother. This is classic terrain for the director of *Speaking Parts* and *Exotica*, and it's handled with his usual baroque flair. Yet Egoyan's copious use of flashbacks, often with a bizarre comic edge, to expand on the present actions of the protagonist creates an excessively neat explanatory framework that violates Trevor's love of enigma. Lacking the warm sympathy that deepened *The Sweet Hereafter*, Egoyan's most recent adaptation, *Felicia's Journey* feels more like a quiet horror movie than a study in the perversion of kindness. Surprisingly, the weakest link in an admirable cast is Hoskins himself, his Cockney accent poking incongruously through a laborious Midlands twang that would fool no one north of Land's End.

'NIGHT, MOTHER

If there is one filmmaker who can be relied on to enlist public sympathy for transvestites, hookers, and criminals, it's Pedro Almodóvar. The Spanish director loves and reveres women: almost everyone worth knowing in his incandescent new film, *All About My Mother*, which won the Cannes Director's Prize this year, is female—at least in spirit. Almodóvar fashions a society of women, loosely defined and all fallen in one way or another, who come together in testy loving kindness to shield one another from a cruel world. Manuela (Cecilia Roth), a middle-aged transplant nurse and single parent, loses her beloved teenage son



Big Sister: Paredes looms over Roth

just as she's poised to reveal the identity of the father he believed was dead. The bereft woman travels to Barcelona to locate her former husband, and finds herself playing den mother to a strange group that includes a pregnant, HIV-positive nun (the luscious young actress Penélope Cruz), an insecure, aging theatrical diva with Bette Davis eyes (played by Almodóvar regular Marisa Paredes), and Manuela's old friend La Agrado, a transvestite hooker rendered with infectious verve by Antonia San Juan). Characteristically funny (though less antic than Almodóvar's previous movies) and cheeky though it is, the movie is no freak show. "All I have that's real are my feelings," the pneumatic La Agrado declares in a spontaneous monologue before a nervous and then enthralled audience of bourgeois theatergoers. Alluring in its bold blues and reds and hot pinks, *All About My Mother* is another vibrant demonstration of Almodóvar's irreverent yet conciliatory humanity, and of his enduring view that gender may be mutable (and all the better for it), but the kindness of strangers is irreducible.

Ella Taylor is a film critic for LA Weekly.

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Classical Music

BY AUSTIN BAER

RETURN TO SENDAK

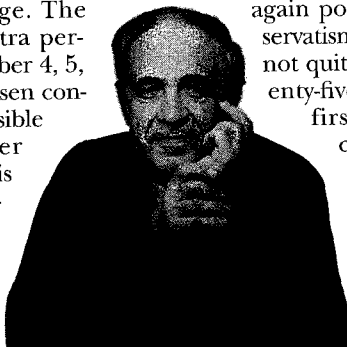
On the very short list of bright operatic adventures conceived for children, Oliver Knussen's brash, unbuttoned *Where the Wild Things Are*, based on the picture book by Maurice Sendak, ranks high. As musical inspirations Knussen cites Mussorgsky, "the supreme composer of music about children," and Debussy, whose music for his daughter Chouchou is "the perfect example of how a composer can make children's music not by 'writing down' to them, but by illuminating his harmonic language in particularly gentle and subtle ways." He goes on to say, "If the result sometimes sounds like an elaborate



Oliver's army: a staging of the opera

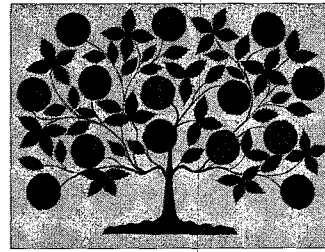
homage to Franco-Russian music from the first decades of this century, it is because that is the music I found most wild and exciting as a child myself." The libretto, by Sendak, expands on the not quite 400 words of the original text. Like the book, however, the opera is a miracle of economy, compressing mad Max's odyssey across the sea to the Wild Things' wild rumpus and back home to his hot supper into a fleet forty minutes. (Following time-honored operatic convention, the part of Max is written not for the circumscribed vocalism of a boy but as a trouser role, requiring the full capacities of a grown-up female soprano.) Ideally *Wild Things* is seen in the opera house, dressed up in Sendak's decor and costumes, but the piece also plays brilliantly on the concert stage. The Boston Symphony Orchestra performs it that way on November 4, 5, and 6 (617-266-1200). Knussen conducts, which is the best possible news. Not every composer excels as an interpreter of his own music; Knussen is emphatically one who does.

Austin Baer is a writer based in New York.



The maestro: Boulez

The songs of the Shakers, like their furniture, make a virtue of simplicity. The celibate Brothers and Sisters—5,000 at their nineteenth-century peak, just seven today—have songs for every occasion, claiming a legacy of more than 10,000. The music is pure melody, sung in unison, without accompaniment. The texts are unadorned. A song named for Father James, sung, according to the manuscript, "after he was whip'd at Harvard" for his beliefs, has no words at all. Yet it bespeaks a faith that in the face of persecution remained unshaken, even cheerful. Five years ago Joel Cohen and the Boston Camerata, early-music virtuosos as devoted to native traditions as they are to the more fashionable traditions of Europe, traveled to Maine to



The Shaker Tree of Life

record this and nearly three dozen other Shaker chants and spirituals. Joining them on the CD *Simple Gifts* (Erato) were the Shakers of Sabbathday Lake, the last remaining Shaker community, whose homespun delivery contrasts touchingly with the tactful, unaffected polish of the professionals. This month, for the first time since the release of the album, the Shakers venture forth for live appearances with Cohen and the Camerata, at the University of Vermont, in Burlington (November 5; 802-656-4455), and in the Great Performers series at Lincoln Center (November 17; 212-721-6500). Dates at the University of Chicago and UCLA follow in February and May. Who knows when or if there will be future chances to see and hear them.

BOULEZ'S PERSPECTIVES

Originally trained in mathematics, Pierre Boulez approaches composition not as an exercise in self-expression but in the spirit of research, seeking to push the envelope of musical possibility. As a conductor, whether of his own works or the works of others, he is above all cool and analytical—which does not prevent his performances from generating intense excitement. His days as principal conductor of the New York Philharmonic (1971–1977) are remembered as tumultuous. Subscribers balked at a heavy diet of challenging contemporary fare and found his way with the classics off-putting. At Carnegie Hall this season, as the subject of a nine-event "Perspectives" series encompassing discussion, concerts, and training workshops, Boulez is again poised to ruffle the conservatism of the Big Apple. But not quite as he used to. At seventy-five, and as a star of the first magnitude, Boulez channels his unflagging energies exclusively into the music of the twentieth century—and the twenty-first.

"Beethoven doesn't need me," he explains, grand old man and young Turk in one. (For details call 212-247-7800.)

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DOUG CORRANCE

Victoria Quay, part of the Scottish Executive (formerly London's Scottish Office), has revitalized a once run-down section of Edinburgh

(Continued from page 24)

ecutive in Edinburgh. Scotland will continue to send a grossly inflated number of MPs to Westminster, where they will be able to vote on such matters as health, education, and welfare for England but not for Scotland. The Parliament in Edinburgh will legislate on such matters, and the spending of money thereon, within Scotland. But the greater part of the money so spent will be taken from English taxpayers.

Not only do a disproportionate number of MPs come from Scotland but so do an even more disproportionate number of Labour MPs. At midsummer fifty-six of the seventy-two Scottish MPs were Labour—fifty-six out of a total of 418 Labour MPs, or 13.4 percent, when Scotland has 8.8 percent of the British population. And Scotland was overrepresented in the Cabinet in a still more flagitious way. Two members of the Cabinet sat in the House of Lords; one of them was Lord Irvine, the Lord Chancellor, who is a Scottish lawyer. Of the other twenty Cabinet members—apart from Tony Blair, who is Scottish by descent, birth, and schooling—five were Scottish MPs. They included the Chancellor of the Exchequer and (as Americans may have noticed during the Balkan conflict, listening to the Caledonian burr of Robin Cook and George Robertson) the Foreign Secretary

and the Defence Secretary. (Robertson has since left the House of Commons to become secretary-general of NATO.)

Understandably, there is already a noticeable English backlash. One result is that the Tories are tempted to become an English national party—they have nothing to lose. The English don't hate the Scots (not in the way we did centuries ago), but we don't want to be governed by them, and as polls show, English resentment is growing over that pattern of higher spending in Scotland—all the more indefensible since large parts of Scotland are now more prosperous than large parts of England.

TORY rule of England—or Great Britain—in the 1980s and 1990s had its ugly aspects, but Labour's long internal rule of Scotland through local authorities wasn't very pretty either. My own at least temporary conversion to what might as well be called Thatcherism came about in Scotland. In 1978 I was covering another by-election, at Garscadden, on the northwestern edge of Glasgow. The seat was fought and won by Donald Dewar, who had been an MP before, in 1966–1970, but had lost his seat, and was making his return to the House of Commons. Dewar served as Tony Blair's Scottish Secretary, and is now chief executive of the new Scottish Parliament.

But it wasn't the election or the candidate that has since been engraved on my mind. It was the place. Garscadden held a record at that time (for all time, quite likely) among British parliamen-

tary constituencies for the largest proportion of inhabitants living in municipal dwellings: 96 percent.

And what dwellings! Most of the borough consisted of badly built tower blocks, less than fifteen years old but already decaying, dirty, and smelly, with garbage in the forecourts and elevators that didn't work. It might have been Magnitogorsk. Into these abodes the poor of Glasgow had been decanted from the 1950s to the 1970s, in the name of slum clearance. There *were* slums in Glasgow, most famously the Gorbals, where condi-

Tony Blair said that the Edinburgh Parliament would be little more than an "English parish council."

tions in overcrowded and insanitary tenements were terrible. But slum clearance was based on a false understanding of city life. The Gorbals, before it was demolished, was filled with fine, massive buildings, made from Scottish sandstone that took a good deal of knocking down. Had they been renovated and given modern amenities, they would have been attractive apartment blocks.

What sort of society was it in which

nineteen out of twenty people could live in council accommodation? The answer was MacNitogorsk—Labour's creation in Scotland, a mixture of decayed municipal socialism and patronage politics. The inhabitants were given somewhere to live; they were expected to vote Labour meekly, and not answer back.

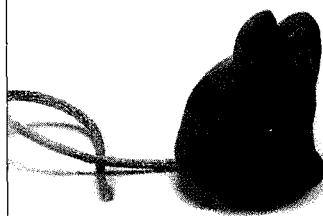
There was more to Labour's rule in Scotland than patronage. One little-examined conflict was sectarianism. It plays a curious, shadowy part in Scottish politics. There have been Protestant-Catholic feuds within Labour. One erupted in a venomous row in the Monklands constituency of John Smith, Blair's predecessor as Labour leader, after his death. But there has also been tension between parties. Labour was the party of the poor, and Scotland's Irish Catholics were the poorest of the poor, so Labour became largely a Catholic party in Scotland.

As for the Nationalists, they were at one time seen as a Protestant party—so much so that SNP was said to stand for "Sorry, No Papists." After all, from the sixteenth to the twentieth century Scottish national identity was closely bound up with Protestantism. Well within living memory there was a pronounced strain of anti-Irish, anti-Catholic nativism in Scotland.

Now the British are among the most irreligious people on earth. The Protestant tradition in particular is in eclipse, which must explain in part why the United Kingdom is unraveling, leaving behind soccer fans of the Rangers, the Protestant club in Glasgow, bitter enemies of the Celtics, the city's Catholic team, chanting and waving the Union Jack—about the only time you see the flag in Scotland today.

RELIGIOUS animosity, like other embarrassing and deliberately overlooked facts of life, is at any rate more authentic than the "invented traditions" on which nationalism is built. Scotland has been peculiarly rich in these. Indeed, "the Highland tradition of Scotland" is a perfect case of such invention. For many non-Scots "Scotland" immediately conjures up the Highlands. Rob Roy, Braveheart, kilts, and bagpipes—images that have nothing to do with most Scottish people for most of the country's history.

Not only is this imagery largely factitious and foolish in itself, but the numerous tartans sold to every gullible American tourist named McSomething are the inventions of astute Victorian business-



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men. More than that, to the extent that there is a genuine Highland tradition, it belongs to a small minority of Scots, when most Scots in modern times have been English-speaking lowlanders.

The nineteenth-century historian Thomas Babington Macaulay poured scorn on the fanciful notion that all Scots were Highlanders and that these "striped petticoats" were the national Scottish costume. The notion was encouraged by reading Sir Walter Scott (or misreading him: some of his novels give a very honest interpretation of Scottish history). One early pinnacle of glorious absurdity was reached when King George IV visited Scotland in 1822 and presented him-

the greatest invented tradition of all. At its most farcical this new nationalism takes the form of the "Braveheart" candidate in last May's election, William Wallace, who dressed in a kilt, wore woad on his face, and accepted defeat with a cosmic howl.

ALTHOUGH some opinion polls have shown that a majority of British people, English and Scottish, now think that Scottish independence will come, it is still a distant prospect. And yet the Scots who partied in the streets on the night of May 6 were celebrating not some mundane political arrangement but—as they saw it—a stage in the rebirth of a nation.

One enthusiast for national rebirth is

election, a television commentator drily observed that Big Tam spoke with authority on the subject of independence, since every year his accountant argues for the complete independence of Connery's income from the British fiscal system.

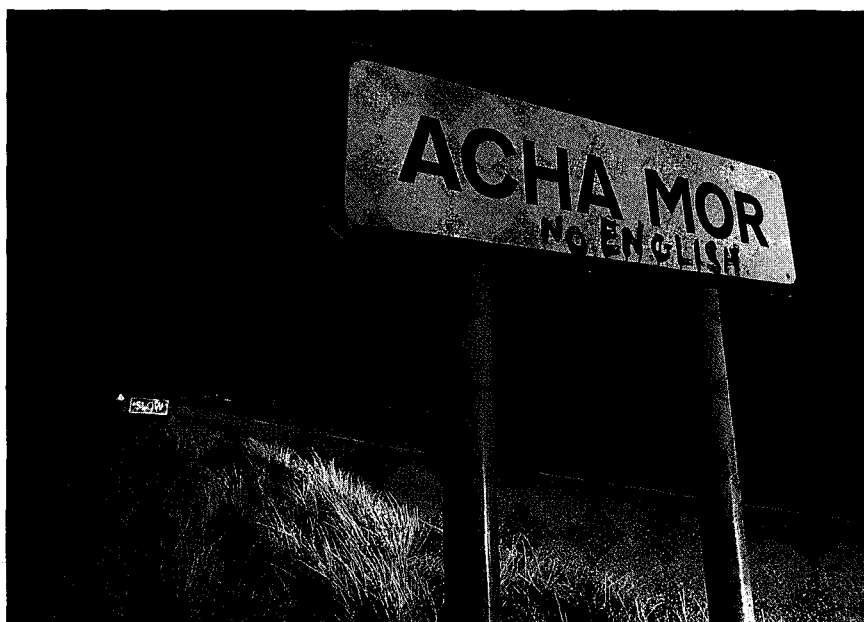
On the other side was the Scottish comedian Billy Connolly. He spoiled the festive mood as the new Scottish Parliament was about to open by calling it "an enormous joke" that did nothing more than add yet another layer of government. He also condemned the Scottish National Party for narrow nativism and for stimulating the growing anti-English feeling in Scotland. "It's entirely their fault, this new racism in Scotland, this anti-Englishness," Connolly says. Though it could formerly be shrugged off as facetiousness, "there is a viciousness to it now that I loathe."

As an Englishman visiting Scotland, I am careful not to exaggerate this. Inverness is not Tuzla, nor Aberdeen another Pristina. But I know what Connolly means. There have always been Scottish jokes about the English, and vice versa. There were always hearty cheers when Scotland beat England at Murrayfield (rugby, not soccer)—but everyone who goes there now senses hostility. For another sour squirt of Anglophobia, take a look at *Trainspotting*.

The reason is not difficult to identify. For all the new mood of confidence, there is an undeniable, and understandable, hang-up about identity. Scotland may become an independent country again. Or it may remain part of a newly modeled United Kingdom. Or it may develop within the "Europe of regions."

The new confidence has been influenced by Ireland and its remarkable economic boom, but in Ireland, too, there is an undercurrent of tension and angst. After all, the great cultural project of Irish nationalism, the Gaelic revival, has been a total failure, and the one institution that really was central to Irish identity, the Catholic Church, is in rapid eclipse. Maybe that is inevitable, maybe desirable. But then, as an English-speaking, secular country, what *is* Ireland?

And what *is* Scotland? It has a Parliament but little political or financial autonomy. The prevailing culture of the country remains British, whatever the SNP says. In the eighteenth century Scotland ceased to be a state but remained a nation. In the twenty-first century it may yet become a state again but diminish as a nation. ☘



JIM RICHARDSON

self before his northern subjects in a kilt (worn over pink tights). In Macaulay's words, the King "thought that he could not give a more striking proof of his respect for the usages which had prevailed in Scotland before the Union, than by disguising himself in what, before the Union, was considered by nine Scotchmen out of ten as the dress of a thief."

This invention continues. It's harmless enough when the Glasgow sign saying WELCOME TO QUEEN STREET also reads FAILTE GU SRAID NA BANRIGHINN, or when another sign, at the Inverness branch of Marks and Spencer, the big British chain store, says FAILTE GU MARKS AGUS SPENCER—although not many people in Inverness, and almost none in Glasgow, read Gaelic.

But there are inventions more misleading than that, and maybe "devolution" is

A road sign on an island in the Outer Hebrides, one place where Scottish Gaelic can still be heard

the SNP's most famous supporter—"Big Tam," otherwise known as Sean Connery. He jets in irregularly to wave the SNP's flag, to a mixture of adulation and derision. He has been involved in an absurd little disagreement with the government. Big Tam claims that he did Blair's lieutenant Peter Mandelson a favor by campaigning during the referendum, and expected in return a knighthood, which he has not received.

Not all the jokes about Connery are bad: "007" is said to be the number of times he has visited his native Scotland since he became a movie star. And when he turned up in Edinburgh for the May

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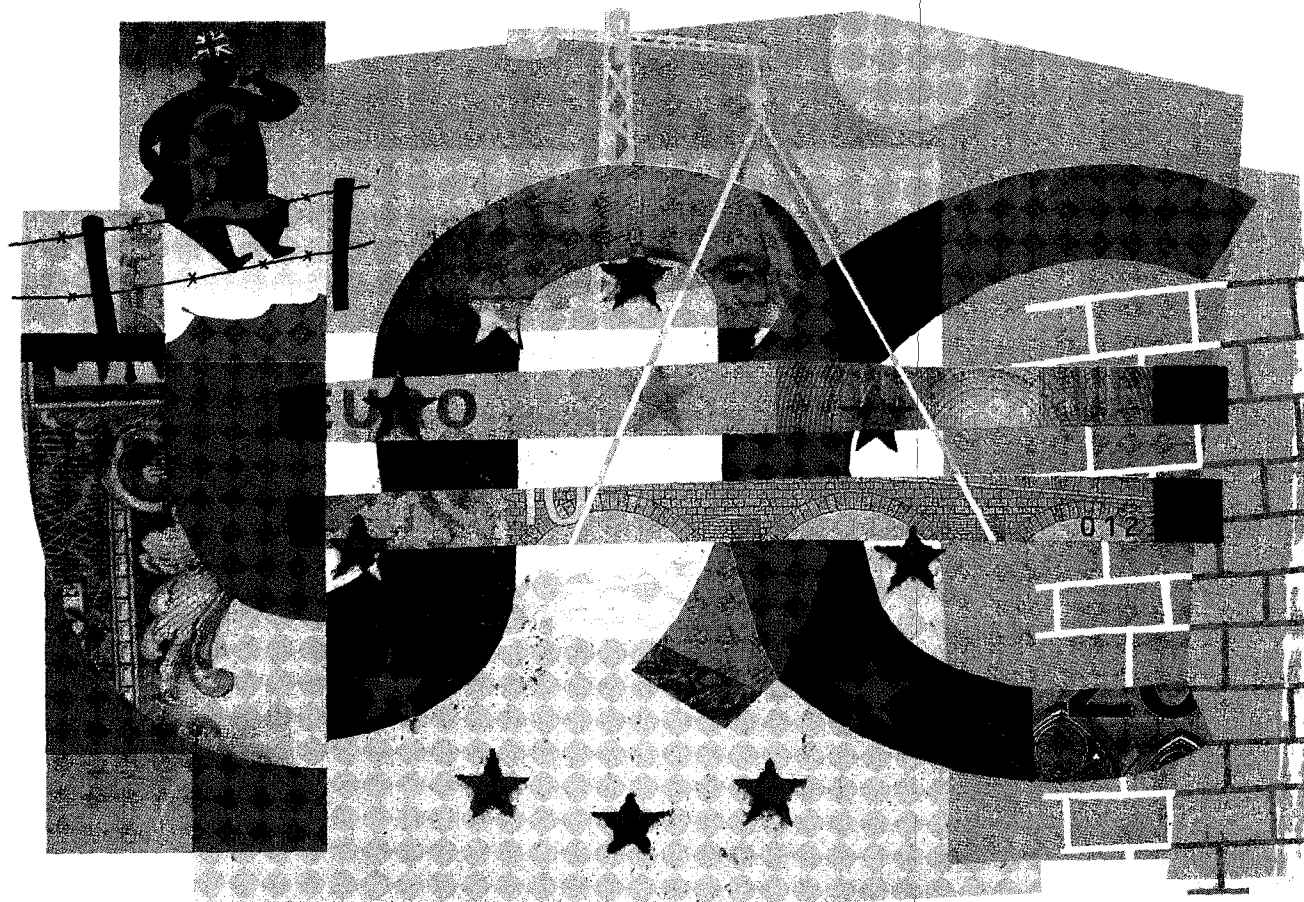
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The European Monetary Union once seemed unimaginable. The questions now are What will it lead to? and Will Britain join?

THE European Monetary Union was born last January 1. Its eleven members, including all the large economies of the European Union except the United Kingdom, which may join in a few years, now have a fixed exchange rate among their currencies and a single monetary policy set by the European Central Bank, in Frankfurt. By July 1, 2002, a single currency, the euro, will have replaced the deutschmark, the franc (Belgian and Luxem-

by Robert A. Levine

bourgian as well as French), and the lira.

The change is immensely significant for world prosperity and stability. The gross domestic product of the EMU is nearly equal to that of the United States;

if Britain joins, it will be 10 percent larger.

"Euroland"—a favorite name among Germans—may someday become as politically and militarily powerful as the United States. For the EMU to fulfill its potential, however, some tough questions must be answered.

What will be the effect of the EMU on European economic growth? The short answer is that the EMU will probably facilitate growth, but much depends on events and the policy responses of the union and its members. The EMU was built by conservative governments fearful of active growth policies; it is now responsible to center-left governments anxious to restore growth but afraid to abandon the union's built-in conservatism.

What will be the effect on European integration? This second answer depends on the first. Prosperity is likely to accelerate integration; economic failure may lead to political disintegration.

A few months after the birth of the EMU I took a trip through Euroland to examine these questions in depth. The answers lie in the history, the economics, and the politics of the nascent confederation.

THE union's economic roots lie in the stagflation of the 1970s. Through the 1960s the central economic objective in Europe, as in the United States, had been full employment. "Keynesian" economic policy was the prescribed instrument:

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rapid growth, leading to high employment, was to be achieved by keeping interest rates down to encourage business investment and by deficit financing when necessary to fill gaps in private demand. If inflation threatened, interest rates could be raised and budget surpluses substituted for deficits.

The oil-price spiral that began with the Yom Kippur War, in 1973, ended that policy. Burdened by unprecedented energy costs, Western economies could not hold either unemployment or inflation at a satisfactory level. As a result, by the early 1980s the electorates of Britain, Germany, France, and the United States all sought change. Except in France, where the socialist François Mitterrand ousted the rightist Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, left-leaning governments were replaced by the right; the Thatcher-Kohl-Reagan era began. The new rightist finance ministries,

fiction slowed growth in most of Europe, because when Chancellor Helmut Kohl's government incurred large budget deficits to pay for the reconstruction of East Germany, the Bundesbank contained the consequent inflationary pressure by raising interest rates. The depressing effects of the high rates spread across the Continent. Throughout this decade inflation has continued on a downward path, but unemployment has increased even further, rising above 10 percent in France and, somewhat later, in Germany. The UK, having opted out of the EMU, has followed its own policies, which have enabled it to reduce unemployment.

The politics of high unemployment have now reversed the governmental shifts of the early 1980s. In France and Germany the socialists Lionel Jospin and Gerhard Schröder have replaced Alain Juppé and Kohl. The transition to Italy's first effective government since the end of the Second World War began on the right but moved left. Outside Euroland, Tony Blair's New Labour defeated John Major's tired Tories.

The overall result is that the EMU—an institution dedicated to solving the problems of the 1970s using the conservative solutions of the 1980s, which were brought into the 1990s by Maastricht—is entering the next millennium under the direction of center-left governments.

Therein lies hope. As Mitterrand discovered in 1982, a single small economy cannot stimulate growth while all its competitors are constraining inflation—later described as the impossibility of “Keynesianism in one country.” But the EMU is no small economy, and the new governments, including the UK if it joins, can use the new machinery for the new objectives of increasing growth and reducing unemployment—which were the old objectives, before the 1970s.

THE new governments and the new machinery face two closely related problems: How to accelerate growth over the long run, and reduce unemployment from the 10-percent-plus rates of the 1990s; and how to keep the shock of an inevitable cyclical downturn from raising unemployment to even higher levels. Two sets of economic policies are available to attack these problems.

Structural policies. One fundamental cause of the long-run problem is structural sclerosis. High taxes to pay for generous social benefits increase the costs of

job creation; regulations that make it difficult to fire employees discourage hiring; generous unemployment benefits increase the incentive for recipients to stay unemployed. The consensus among economists and businessmen is that rigidity must give way to flexibility, and dirigisme must be replaced by private entrepreneurship.

Macroeconomic policies. More controversial is the contention that structural change must be supported by a Keynesian stimulus. A number of European economists, and I, argue that only part of the unemployment problem is structural—that employment and growth in the 1990s have been stymied by too-high interest rates, and that rates should be lowered and kept down. Deficit financing may also be needed, particularly in a deflationary environment or a downturn.

The game that determines the future of Euroland will be played out over time—political and economic time. Political time is based on electoral schedules: the next national elections in Britain, France, and Germany are scheduled for 2002. This time frame should provide stable center-left governments in the years before the actual substitution of the new currency—although there is now evidence to suggest that the center-left German coalition led by Gerhard Schröder may be less stable than it seemed in September of 1998, when it came to power.

Economic time is less predictable. Even if the three to four years of political stability are also stable economically, a failure to make significant reductions in 10-percent-plus unemployment will increase pre-election pressure on governments. And if economies turn down, further increasing unemployment, the EMU may be forced to move in directions alien to its inherited conservatism.

FOR now, the major players are France and Germany. Italy is virtually tied with France for second largest GDP in the union, but the Italians won't fight their weight until they've resolved their political situation. Britain will remain an influence even if it doesn't join, but will be a major player only if it does. Meanwhile, the European Central Bank, granted political independence by Maastricht, plays its own role, representing the conservative legacy.

France has become the economic dynamo of Western Europe—at least in perception. Its growth has accelerated, al-

By July 1, 2002, the euro will have replaced the deutschmark, the franc, and the lira—raising tough questions.

aided by their conservative central banks, determined to beat inflation down even at the cost of keeping unemployment high. France under Mitterrand tried the opposite tack but was pulled into line by its European competitors. Average annual inflation in the United Kingdom, Germany, and France fell by about two thirds from the period 1974–1983 to 1984–1991; unemployment increased by anywhere from a third to more than two thirds.

This was the background for the 1991 Maastricht Treaty, which created the EMU. To join the union, applicants were required to “converge” by this year on four criteria: low inflation, a narrow range of interest rates, stable exchange rates, and budget deficits no greater than three percent of GDP. Growth and employment were mentioned only in passing.

The revolution that had swept Eastern Europe two years before, culminating in the reunification of Germany and the end of the Soviet Union, was ignored. Reuni-

though unemployment has been reduced only slightly. Since his upset election in 1997 Prime Minister Jospin has used his political skills to replace despair with optimism. Jospin had an easy act to follow: his right-wing predecessor, Alain Juppé, stumbled through every issue, talked down to the French, and came to be thoroughly disliked by them. The rightist President Jacques Chirac, who committed the political blunder of calling the snap election that ended Juppé's career, remains popular, but the right is disintegrating.

Jospin's most publicized measures have been economic sleight of hand. The reduction of the work week from thirty-nine to thirty-five hours for purposes of job-sharing is being implemented in meaningless ways amid great confusion. The creation of 350,000 public jobs for youth has put attractive young men and women into post offices but is having little real economic impact, and is not being matched by the private sector, as originally intended. Jospin's enemies accuse him of substituting chicanery for action; older Americans may recall that Franklin Delano Roosevelt saved America from fear itself well

before the New Deal effected real change.

The thirty-five-hour week and other magic measures are associated with the Employment Minister, Martine Aubry, a name spat out by bourgeois Frenchmen. France's real steps toward economic change are directed by the respected Finance Minister, Dominique Strauss-Kahn. Although France's markets are far from unfettered in the American style, structural reform is under way. Privatization, which caused major confrontations under previous governments, is happening with little controversy at Air France, banks, and aerospace and other firms. Social spending, though still not under control, is moving in that direction; hiring and firing regulations are being evaded in the American way—with temporary contracts. True, such bastions of proletarian conservatism as the civil service remain unchallenged, but a strong start has been made.

Macroeconomically, exports derived from the American boom that now sustains all the world, plus increased French consumption stemming in part from Jospinian optimism, have provided a base for Strauss-Kahn's cautious policies.

France has supported interest-rate cuts by the European Central Bank and would not object to more. Most expenditures have been strictly controlled, and economic growth has converted the budget deficit to a surplus, as in the United States; also as in the United States, the talk is of spending part of the surplus for tax cuts. It is significant, however, that if revenues fall again because of a downturn, the Finance Ministry stands ready to maintain expenditures even at the cost of renewed deficits—a compensatory stimulus that economists call an "automatic stabilizer." A number of French economists, including several on Jospin's Council for Economic Analysis, have favored going even further, using deliberate tax-cut stimuli to break the continuing inertia of unemployment.

Germany's growth has been more irregular, its policies more uncertain, and its mood darker. Its unemployment rate is comparable to France's, but nobody seems to be doing anything about it. Successful reconstruction of the eastern economy remains a distant goal. Most German economists, and the powerful bankers of Frankfurt, stand firmly in the structural camp,

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believing that if taxes and social benefits are reduced and regulations relaxed, the free market will reduce unemployment.

Helmut Kohl's conservative government was ideologically attuned to Frankfurt but achieved little. Schröder's government started out confused. His first Finance Minister, the old-time radical Oskar Lafontaine, seemed sometimes to revert to his socialist roots, sometimes to follow the learned Keynesianism of his chief economist, Heiner Flassbeck. The result, although moderate in practice, scared the European Central Bank and German banks and businesses. Lafontaine pressed the ECB to reduce interest rates; although few disagreed that such cuts were needed to combat Euroland's sluggish growth, critics saw his pressure as violating the ECB's independence. Domestically, the projected budget deficit stayed within EMU limits, but Lafontaine

Europeans should read The Federalist Papers— a discussion of similar problems in the nascent United States.

proposed increased progressivity in the tax and benefit systems. And Lafontaine and Flassbeck deepened the fright by talking a more radical policy than they proposed for the government program.

Last March, Lafontaine suddenly resigned, for political reasons that were only partly related to his economic policies. Schröder, a political pragmatist already in trouble for reasons other than the business community's hard opposition to Lafontainism, replaced him with a recently defeated but respected politician, Hans Eichel.

Eichel, also a pragmatist, lacked Flassbeck's intellectual support, which had enabled Lafontaine to stand up to Frankfurt. He quickly turned right, responding to the reduction in tax revenues that resulted from slowing growth by proposing drastic cuts in spending, thus risking an aggravation of the slowdown by abandoning automatic stabilizers. Schröder and Eichel promised structural change, but their ability to carry it through is in

doubt. Indeed, a series of stunning autumn electoral defeats casts doubt on their ability to carry anything out.

The economies of the other nine EMU members vary, from the social compact of the Netherlands, which has seemingly resolved the tension between structural flexibility and social stability, to the growing but still relatively small economies of Spain and Portugal. The nine will remain followers.

THE United Kingdom will not be a follower, even as a nonmember. Its potential membership hangs over the existing EMU; its potential competition limits Euroland's options; its membership in the European Union's other institutions entangles it with the EMU's strings. If Britain does join, it will become an instant leader.

British membership will depend on two factors, one economic and the other political. If its economy remains as different from the EMU's as it is now (Britain's unemployment rate is about six percent, for example), the UK is unlikely to join: success does not sign up to join failure. And if Britons believe that EMU membership will lead to political integration with the Continent, they are unlikely to join. Lord David Owen, who is pro-European Union, as he was when he served as a Labour Foreign Secretary in the 1970s, leads an anti-EMU movement based on the premises that political integration will inevitably follow EMU membership and that Britain wants none of it.

The final player is the European Central Bank. For the ECB the inherent orthodoxy and supposed political independence of central banks is reinforced by the Maastricht criteria and the charter guarantee of independence; the Federal Reserve, in contrast, is governed by laws specifying attention to growth as well as to price stability, and reports regularly to Congress. The real question, however, is how much the ECB's governors will differ from Alan Greenspan, whose deliberate mumbles sound orthodox whereas his adept actions show far more flexibility. The current ECB president, Wim Duisenberg, of the Netherlands, sounds quite conservative, but he did lower interest rates once he was rid of Lafontaine. The agreement whereby Duisenberg became president calls for his replacement halfway through the first presidential term by Jean-Claude Trichet, who is French and thus perhaps flexible.

New policies are unlikely in the current situation. Should the situation deteriorate in a cyclical downturn, France is ready to adapt, and the ECB's actions may be more flexible than its pronouncements. If Germany can solve its problems, the EMU, which makes it possible to transcend "Keynesianism in one country," may ease the fall by applying an economic stimulus across the Continent. If not, Euroland (without Britain, which certainly would not join under those circumstances) will resemble the Europe of the 1920s—depressed, contentious, and vulnerable to the politics of despair.

ONCE the euro is in place, not even 1920s-style failure should cause the collapse of the EMU. But failure will not lead to political integration; crisis is more likely to encourage nationalism.

Success, on the other hand, will both require and engender further integration. Although the ECB already sets a single monetary policy, that policy will not necessarily suffice, particularly in case of crisis; a crisis would call for increasing deficits. And that would require substantial coordination (read "integration") within the EMU—which is why Strauss-Kahn's Finance Ministry proposes setting up coordinating machinery now.

Coordinated decision-making on deficits would be a major step in integration. It would increase the power of the managers of the machinery, making them proto-decision-makers for the EMU as a whole, but raising questions of democratic control that would suggest the need to increase the power of the European Parliament or to create other mechanisms for political responsibility. All this would not suddenly introduce a federation; instead it would encourage a re-evaluation of the EMU's division of powers.

But whatever combination of old American and new European ideas set the model, the success of the EMU would lead toward a Europe that can be defined at least as loosely confederal if not more tightly federal. Whether that is desirable is up to Europeans to say. Helmut Kohl certainly thought it was desirable for Germany. Lord Owen considers it undesirable for Britain. But they agree that it is the real potential of the European Monetary Union.

And if the potential is realized, the United States will have a powerful new competitor—but also a partner to share the burdens of world leadership. ☛

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India's Grand Trunk Road

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ACROSS the emerald pool fell a shimmering image of lotus-shaped cupolas and copper-gilt walls. Dhoti-clad men lowered themselves on chains into the water to perform ablutions; women in saris murmured prayers in Punjabi. Such a domain of peace and piety—the Golden Temple,

by Jeffrey Tayler

the sanctum sanctorum of Sikhism—had been impossible to imagine while navigating the clamorous lanes of Amritsar outside. The temple was orderly, efficient, with gurus on duty in shrines around its sides, and with Sikh bookstores and a museum of Sikh history at its entrance. Sikh guards, dressed in

robes of alabaster white and turbans of royal blue, patrolled the chalk-soft marble walkways with spears, enforcing a discipline and solemnity foreign to places of worship elsewhere in India.

India has manifold communities, and the Sikhs are among the most prosperous, hardworking, and insular of them. But it was not specifically an interest in Sikhs that drew me to Amritsar during the recent hot season (lasting roughly from April to July), before the monsoon. Rather, my motive for coming was to travel the road across northern India that begins in the Sikh state, the Punjab. The road had captured my imagination years ago, when I read Rudyard Kipling's *Kim*. At the beginning of the century Kipling called it "a wonderful spectacle . . . without crowding. . . green-arched, shade-flecked . . . a river of life . . . the backbone of all Hind." But India's National Highway No. 1, alias the Grand Trunk Road, or simply the GT, presented me with a less than grand first impression when I saw it on my way to the temple. Careering down the GT's sun-warped macadam were legions of trucks and rattling buses manned by drivers whose respect for the sanctity of life and limb put me in mind of the maraud-



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Above, dawn brings pilgrims and peddlers to the Ganges. Top, a poster for Delhi's Charity Birds Hospital

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THE BLENDING of ART and MACHINE

ing barbarians of subcontinental yore. Mud-splattered buffalo jostled their way among swerving auto-rickshaws. Brahmin cows ambled down the middle of the road, pondering their world as they chewed cud and disrupted traffic. Its dangers aside, the GT remains, as Kipling wrote, "the road of Hindustan" along which "all India spread out to left and right." What's more, it runs through many of India's most historic places, including Delhi, Agra, and Varanasi, the holiest city of Hinduism, and ends just beyond Calcutta, the capital of the British Raj.

Geography has destined the GT to play a role in the history of India in every age. Since the Aryan invasion of the subcontinent, 3,500 years ago, the natural route that starts at the Khyber Pass and sweeps east, between the Himalayas and the Thar Desert onto the Gangetic plain, has served as a corridor for the movement of travelers, goods, armies, and ideas. Hinduism, Jainism, Sikhism, and Buddhism all developed in its environs, and Muslim proselytizers traveled it on their missions. Since Partition, in 1947, Pakistan has controlled the 300-mile segment between Peshawar and Lahore, but the other 1,250 miles of the GT still link six Indian states. It is the lifeline of northern India.

Religious animosity along the Grand Trunk Road has caused much bloodshed, and nowhere more than in the Punjab. In 1984 Sikh separatists seized the Golden Temple, and the Indian government, in Operation Blue Star, blasted them out, killing more than 2,000 people. A few months later Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, who had ordered the assault, was assassinated in revenge by her Sikh bodyguards. The temple has since been repaired, and the Punjab is now at peace. But when I walked into the Akal Takht, the second most sacred shrine on the grounds of the Golden Temple, I found a guru ritualistically brandishing swords, sabers, and daggers, and explaining to the assembled company the bloody history of each weapon. A middle-aged Sikh introduced himself as Jatinder and said to me in hushed, stern tones, "Look at these

weapons. We do not advocate war. But when you are attacked, you must fight, and fight like a lion. Hand to hand." Sikhs, he said, had cultivated a certain militancy out of necessity, having been much persecuted over the centuries by their neighbors. Hence the discipline, the patrolling guards, the temple's rare emphasis on order.

A FEW days later, on the ashen lot of Amritsar's Roadway Station, I boarded a serviceable gray bus marked STATE TRANSPORT for my first trip on the Grand Trunk Road. A succession of chanting coconut vendors, importunate nut peddlers, and itinerant cucumber salesmen, their skinned oblong wares dispensed with

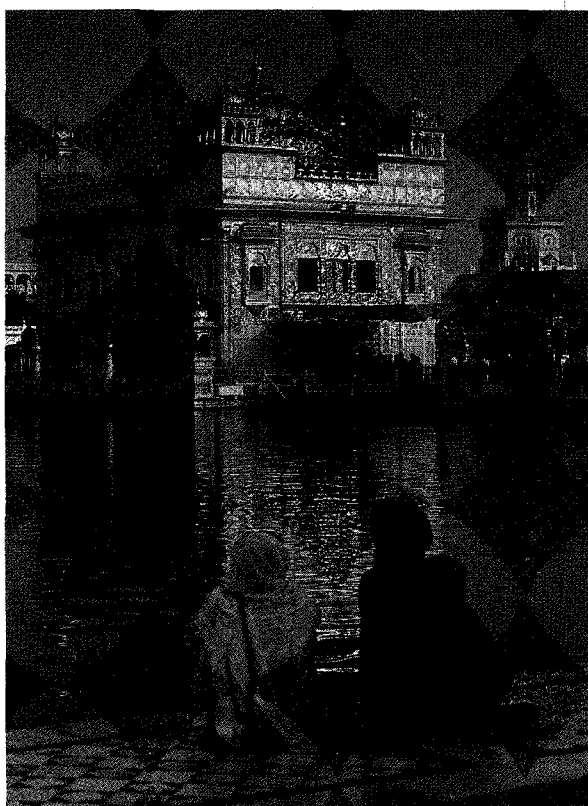
ly in one motion, flung open the driver's door and hurled himself into his seat, started the engine, blasted his horn, and hit the accelerator. As I leaped aboard, vendors jumped out. I stumbled to my seat, my hair sprinkled with nuts. Ahead of us carts scattered and merchants darted for their lives. Minutes later we sped onto the eucalyptus-lined tarmac, forcing our way between lazy bullock carts and wobbling bicycles, overloaded auto-rickshaws and imperious cows. Passenger cars the driver simply drove off the road with a flourish of his horn and a shake of his fist.

Despite the pace, I enjoyed the breeze flowing in through my window. Flat and fertile Punjabi farms, dotted with oxen straining ahead of wooden ploughs, slipped by between the tree trunks. I dozed off, but found my sleep peopled by fiendish turban-topped drivers who laughed as they barreled their trucks toward us head-on in harrowing games of chicken. I started awake—to find turbaned Sikh drivers laughing as they barreled their trucks toward us head-on in harrowing games of chicken. On the Grand Trunk Road every bus, truck, and jalopy must pass the vehicle ahead, and chicken is the sport of choice.

VULTURES swirled in the steely noon sky above the towers and bastions of Delhi's massive Red Fort, a grand sandstone structure that saw most of its treasures and furnishings plundered by the Persians in 1739 and during the Raj. Across from it stands an ochreous Jain temple, on the grounds of which is the Charity Birds Hospital. The Jain sect of Hinduism holds that all life is sacred. Though this is not a particularly original religious

precept, the fact that the Jains have built an animal sanctuary and hired doctors to heal injured birds, rabbits, and squirrels is impressive. I wanted to see this place.

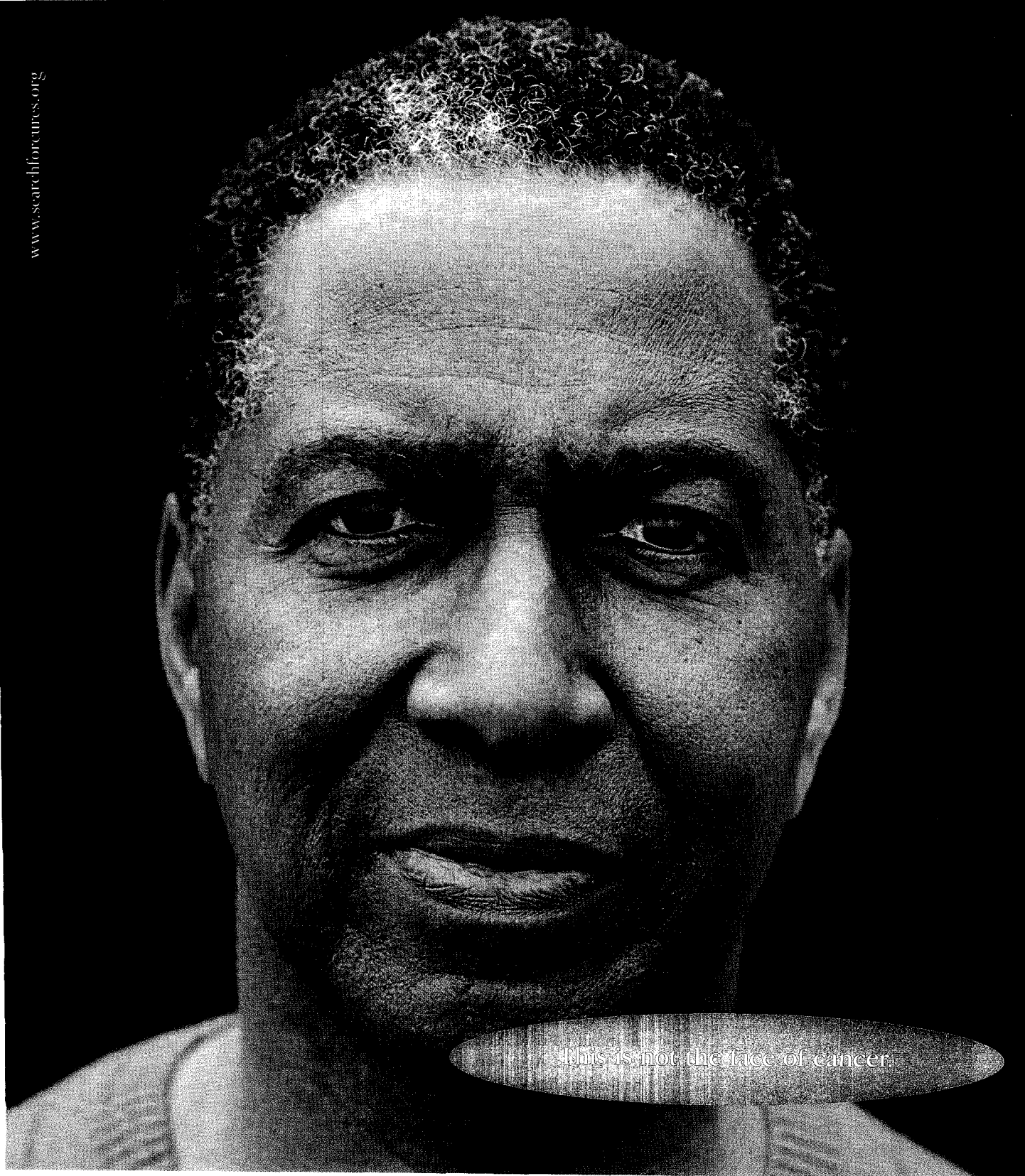
I deposited my shoes and leather belt at the temple gate (no items made from animal products are allowed inside) and mounted the stairs to the hospital. A girl ran past me in tears, carrying a partridge in cupped hands. Upstairs a young Hindu veterinarian (the only Jain involved is the manager) carefully pinched the bird's beak



Nine hundred pounds of gold leaf are reflected in the waters of the Golden Temple

pinches of salt from grimy fingers, meandered up and down the aisle. A man displayed a selection of plastic fans, and I bought one. The heat was terrific, well over 112°, and the humidity debilitating; I yearned to get moving. It looked as though we would be going nowhere soon, however—there was no driver about. I stepped off the bus to stretch my legs.

I should not have underestimated the Sikh penchant for discipline. At the exact departure time a turbaned Sikh, seeming-



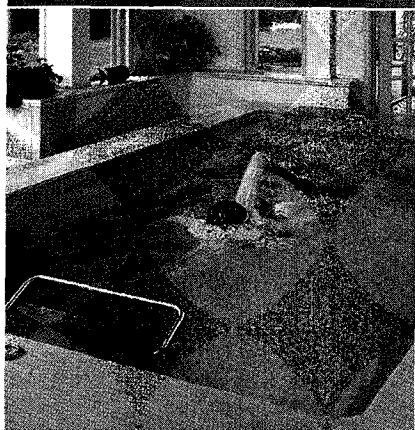
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and administered medicine with a dropper.

I wandered through the intensive-care ward, a narrow tiled room with shoebox-sized birdcages on one side and walk-in cages on the other. Melancholy parrots pecked at mangos; mange-ridden rabbits ran up to the cage mesh to sniffle at me as I passed. Most distressing, pigeons stood with their heads drooping on necks as flaccid as rubber bands, blinking helplessly, looking at me with their eyes upside down. The vet came up and introduced himself as Dr. Vijay. "They are suffering from encephalomalacia, a common problem among pigeons," he said.

An aquiline shriek resounded from the end of the ward. In a walk-in cage a tawny eagle, huge and powerfully built, was trying and failing to flap a cast-bound wing. My eyes scanned the wall above him and fell upon murals showing ceiling fans slicing up hapless swallows, peacocks pruning their tails, hawks tearing into squirming sparrows. The eagle was a flesh-eater, and the mural above him, with its depiction of one of his carnivorous fellows, seemed to consign him to the category of an ornithological Genghis Khan. I asked Dr. Vijay how he felt about this patient.

"Well, in truth we cannot permit him to stay long, because of his lifestyle."

"What do you feed him?"

"Chapati."

"You feed eagles bread? Do they eat it?"

"They prefer other things, but we cannot allow them to pursue their way of life here. It is against our philosophy."

The eagle shrieked again, extending his yard-long healthy wing and lurching about. A slab of chapati lay untouched in the corner of his cage.

IN Agra I toured the Taj Mahal, and Itmad-ud-daulah, the predecessor to the Taj, and Agra Fort, all Mogul. But, hankering after Varanasi, 400 miles down the GT, I did not linger. My bus clanked out of town under a sky that hung like a sepia shroud over wattle-and-straw hutments scattered across endless flat earth that was dun-colored and desiccated in some places, marked with pale green in others. This was the Gangetic plain, home to 300 million Indians, the cradle of Hindu civilization. It was this plain that the English left for cool Himalayan hill stations at just this time of year. But the heat—four months of humid 112° weather—is not only the enemy of unacclima-

tized colonizers; too powerful to adapt to, it is also an intruder in the lives of Indians. Around me passengers fanned themselves feverishly and gulped bottled water, sweated and complained. "The heat!"

THE City of Temples. The City of Light. The City of Shiva the Destroyer. The *tirtha*, or crossing place, where mortals may consort with the gods. Varanasi has stood at the center of the Hindu universe, on the northern bank of Ganga Ma, or Mother Ganges, for almost 3,000 years. It is also the City of Death, where the dying gather to attain *moksha*, or enlightenment, which is guaranteed if they die and are cremated on the shores of the Ganges. Enlightenment means liberation from the onerous cycle of reincarnation. Devout Hindus come for an expiatory dip in the river's green-brown flux, descending to the waters on the ghats, or step landings, that cover the northern bank.

Early on the day after my arrival I headed down to the river. As the rising sun suffused the auroral haze with heat and glare, my boatman, a dwarf by the name of Bhaiyalal, with teeth stained red from chewing betel nuts, poled our skiff away from the growing mayhem of Dashashwamedha Ghat.

I had taken a taxi from my hotel to Dashashwamedha Road, alighting at the point beyond which vehicles are not allowed. But there was other traffic. Dhoti- and sari-garbed pilgrims, their heads shaved, the soles of their feet splashed with a hot-pink dye called *alta*, carried pots and clay vessels and effigies of the gods, jamming the narrow lanes and hustling toward the river. I found myself pressed in among them, neither sharing nor understanding their excitement, feeling most of all bewildered and out of place. A steel railing divided the length of the staircase leading to the ghat; along it squatted ash-covered fakirs and naked Hindu ascetics who held out tin bowls into which the pilgrims tossed rupees in a ceaseless din of clinks and pings.

At Dashashwamedha Ghat I met Bhaiyalal. We settled on a small fee for his boating services and shoved off.

Bathers, many laughing, some boisterous, were splashing their way out into the murky waters around us, cupping their hands and reciting their hymns, oblivious of Bhaiyalal's poling maneuvers and my presence. Some dunked their vessels and poured water into their mouths; others sub-



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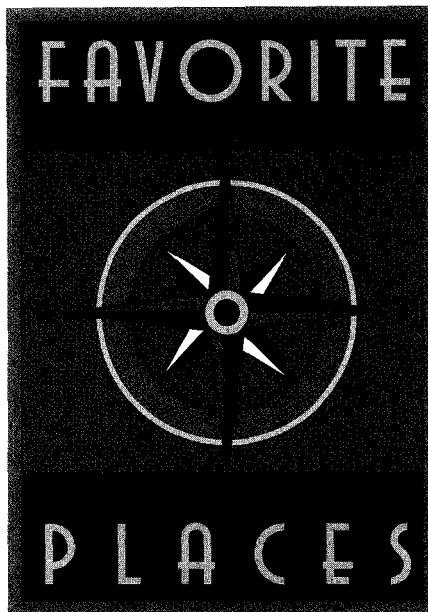
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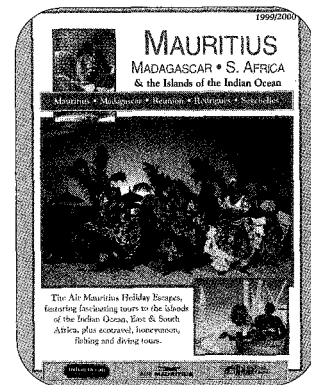
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merged sacks of clothes or simply soaked up and scrubbed themselves down. A few released *diyas*, buoyant palm-sized clay dishes matted with marigold blossoms and containing lit candles, as offerings to Ganga Ma. To give the toddler selling the *diyas* a bit of business, I did the same.

We pulled out beyond the bathers. Along the high curve of the bank, draped with swathes of sodden mist, rose Varanasi's Old City, an agglomeration of orange-steepled temples, burnt-sienna hostels, and houses with rotting teak shutters closed to the river—the holiest sight in the Hindu world. Bhaiyalal paddled with the current; we drifted east. Chants echoed across the waters, which rippled as slowly as oil in the still air.

"Sir! Hello, sir!"

A corpulent boatman in Levis and Adidas was coming toward us. He put down his oar and gestured at the postcards of the ghat, the plastic temple figurines, and the rolls of Kodak film he had arranged on his bow. "You will be needing souvenir, no? Ten rupees Temple of Kali, fifty rupees a set . . ."

"No, thanks."

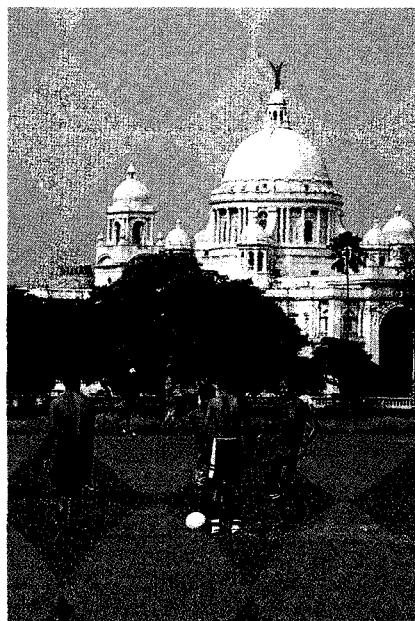
He persisted, and I ended up rebuking him sharply—we were, after all, on a holy river, not in a souk. We left him bobbing amid the *diyas*. But soon others were besieging us with similar spiels. The floating pitchmen accept no semblance of piety from non-Hindus. Traditionally, Hinduism does not seek converts. Non-Hindus remain fundamentally separate and different from those born with a caste. In a way, a commercial response to my presence made sense.

Eventually we drew near a concave assembly of soot-blackened buildings overlooking a dozen fires stoked by sooty men—the cremation ghats of Manikarnika. Ashes covered the banks in waist-high piles. Untouchable laborers sank shovels into these, pursuing the solemn business of dispatching the deceased into the current. Four men bore a body wrapped in orange—a woman, Bhaiyalal said, noting the color—on a bamboo stretcher for a pre-cremation dunk in the river.

I told Bhaiyalal to return to Dashashwamedha Ghat. I had seen enough.

FROM Varanasi the Grand Trunk Road crosses Bihar State—a land of scrub jungle and torrid coal-black hills, caste warfare, and dacoity—and then winds its way southeast into West Bengal, through

the swamps and paddies of the Ganges delta. In Howrah, the city facing Calcutta across the Hooghly River, the GT ends. By Indian standards Calcutta is young, dating back to the arrival of the British, in the seventeenth century. From then until independence the city was an abode of great wealth and sophistication, a regional entrepôt and a locus of power, and home to an educated elite. It was Partition, in which the majority-Muslim territory to the east broke away from India and became East Pakistan (later Bangladesh), that sent millions of refugees into Calcutta and gave it a reputation for poverty. Ever since, predictions of collapse, implosion, and urban Armageddon have been made about it, but Calcutta goes on.



In Calcutta's Maidan park, soccer and the Victoria Memorial

By the time I arrived in Calcutta, the heat along the GT had exhausted me, and the alienation I had felt in Varanasi had depressed me; I had not expected that India would prove so difficult to appreciate. Calcutta restored me. In an old monograph about the city, I had read of a certain nineteenth-century marble palace built off Chittaranjan Avenue by a prominent Bengali landowner, Raja Rajendro Mullick Bahadur. This was said to be stocked with priceless objets d'art from Renaissance Europe. A taxi driver found it for me. A dollar's worth of baksheesh to a guard procured entry (technically, one needs permission from the authorities or the family to visit), and I walked onto the grounds. The palace, standing behind

a derelict fountain flanked by palms, was indeed of marble, though it was so soot-blackened as to be almost indistinguishable from the tenements nearby; its latticework shutters were rotten and filthy.

Then I walked inside. Crystal chandeliers hung in tiled ballrooms, ceiling-high mirrors of Belgian glass reflected Ming vases and bronze statues of Napoleon and Queen Victoria. Busts of hauntingly beautiful Italian mistresses filled dark corridors. A painting by Rubens, *The Marriage of St. Catherine*, covered one wall; well-executed canvases hung on others. As I wandered through half a dozen chambers chock-full of exquisite works of art, I felt a growing affinity with their deceased collector, sensing the aesthetic rush he must have felt in their presence. Doubtless Bahadur had been enraptured by his collection—its profusion and disorder spoke of his zeal. I pictured him a recluse, perhaps half mad, collecting these paintings and statues to create a dimly lit but richly appointed paradise in which to live and die.

The next evening I made my way down Nehru Road toward the Maidan, the 1,280-acre public park that serves as the lungs of Calcutta. The temperature, moderated by the proximity of the Bay of Bengal, was a mere 90°. Manicured grassy expanses stretched away toward the Hooghly, and I set out to traverse them. In the last light, cricketers and soccer players were winding up their games beneath the palms; polo enthusiasts were practicing their moves, the muffled thunder of their horses' hooves on turf mingling with the *whoosh-clock!* of mallets passing through the air to strike the bouncing balls. Monsoon clouds obscured the sunset. I halted, breathing in the fresh air, soothed by the sounds of the mallets and the hooves.

Suddenly, above the great steel cantilevers of Howrah Bridge, the gray clouds in the west lit up lava-orange, as if the sun were a nova, and then went dark. Raindrops—the first of the monsoon—began pattering my forehead. The monsoon would move across India, from Calcutta to Amritsar, to soak the parched land along the Grand Trunk Road. The Ganges would rise and spill over its banks and fertilize the plain with silt, thereby renewing the annual cycle—older than the Raj and older than the Moguls, older even than Varanasi—on which the subcontinent depends. ☸

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40	\$ 123	\$ 158	\$ 185	\$ 238	\$ 260
45	\$ 190	\$ 215	\$ 253	\$ 330	\$ 385
50	\$ 253	\$ 290	\$ 363	\$ 490	\$ 495
55	\$ 365	\$ 413	\$ 550	\$ 835	\$ 1,015
60	\$ 503	\$ 615	\$ 845	\$ 2,135	\$ 2,400
65	\$ 775	\$ 975	\$1,593	\$ 3,900	\$ 3,900
70	\$1,338	\$ 1,600	\$2,970	\$ 7,220	\$ 7,220
75	\$2,275	\$ 4,870	\$5,820	\$10,370	\$12,420

Male Premiums

Age	10 YEAR	15 YEAR	20 YEAR	25 YEAR	30 YEAR
35	\$ 123	\$ 138	\$ 165	\$ 223	\$ 253
40	\$ 148	\$ 183	\$ 225	\$ 288	\$ 335
45	\$ 225	\$ 300	\$ 360	\$ 450	\$ 513
50	\$ 338	\$ 455	\$ 525	\$ 743	\$ 828
55	\$ 500	\$ 670	\$ 768	\$ 1,640	\$ 2,330
60	\$ 783	\$ 990	\$1,335	\$ 3,630	\$ 3,630
65	\$1,330	\$ 1,650	\$2,693	\$ 5,250	\$ 5,250
70	\$2,473	\$ 3,175	\$4,860	\$ 8,790	\$ 8,790
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FAME

The Power and Cost of a Fantasy

by SUE ERIKSON BLOLAND

The daughter of an eminent psychoanalyst uses her experience to help us understand the pursuit of celebrity—its psychological roots, its social meaning, its human cost

IT SEEMS INEVITABLE TO ME NOW that I should have become preoccupied with fame. My father became famous when I was an adolescent, and his celebrity has loomed over me ever since, affecting me in confusing and conflicting ways. It has sometimes been a source of great pride to be Erik Erikson's daughter, but more often it has overwhelmed my sense of myself—been demoralizing, diminishing, even paralyzing. Regardless of how it affects me at any given moment, my father's fame is always there to be reckoned with, a powerful force in my life. So I have struggled to try to understand the emotional intensity that is associated with fame as a way of diminishing its power over me.

Of course, I have always longed to feel better understood by the many admirers of my father who assume that they know what it would be like to be in my shoes, who have envied my good fortune at being the daughter of the eminent psychoanalyst. I have indeed been fortunate—but not in the ways that my father's image would lead one to believe.

And now a book has been written about my father and about our



family—*Identity's Architect: A Biography of Erik H. Erikson*, by Lawrence J. Friedman. This is a thorough account of my father's life and work, written thoughtfully and with great respect. But despite Friedman's extraordinary accomplishment in piecing together information gained from archival research and close to a hundred interviews with family members and with people who have known my

parents, his description of intimate family relationships and family affairs cannot possibly reflect my own experience—any more than *my* description could capture the experience of anyone else, within or outside the family. That the story of my father's fame has appeared in Friedman's words makes it more urgent for me to write of it now in my own words.

Not long after my father's first book, *Childhood and Society* (1950), was published, I witnessed a dramatic transformation in how people related to him and an equally dramatic transformation in how he related to them. He became

When we grant another person the status of hero, we deny our own full potential for empowerment. Adulation dulls our awareness of the human dimensions of those we idealize, limiting our knowledge of them and of ourselves as human beings.

the luminous center of attention at most social and professional gatherings, where people milled around him, obviously excited, doing their best to make conversation with one another while awaiting their turn to engage with *him*. In his presence they became mysteriously childlike: animated, eager, deferential, anxious to gain his interest and approval.

Friends and admirers all seemed intent on idealizing my father, seeing in him someone much more important and powerful than themselves. People would ask me, "What is he *really* like?" and I knew they wanted their fantasies confirmed, not an honest answer about a real human being. Or, upon first learning that he was my father, someone might say, "Really? Can I touch you?"—conveying even more directly what magical power they ascribed to his very being. (At such moments I became little more than a conduit for my father's magic; this was one of the many ways in which his fame diminished me and my sense of my own place in the world.)

My father was a tall man with an impressive shock of white hair, which gave him a distinctive and dignified look. He had kindly eyes and a gentle face. He appeared to be the quintessential father figure: concerned, compassionate, and knowing. With the advent of his fame he acquired a larger-than-life social aura, a special air of confidence, which nourished people's fantasies about him and suggested that he felt as wise and as comfortable with himself as they perceived him to be. His words, even his most casual remarks, were heard as profoundly meaningful, because of the reverence accorded their source. And people often felt deeply understood by him even

in the course of a brief conversation—the profundity of his empathic responses was magnified by his aura.

Once, when I gave a party for some college friends, I saw the excitement in their faces the moment my father walked into the room, and I saw the transformation in him the moment he became the center of their attention. There was electricity in the air—a sense that something out of the ordinary was about to happen. And because of the anticipation on both sides, something did happen. It was a charged dance between people with an intense need to idealize and a person who needed just as intensely to be idealized. Once this dance had begun, I found myself wondering why I had ever thought the occasion would be enjoyable for me. I felt deflated by my father's fame—not enhanced, as I had always hoped to feel, but momentarily invisible.

The idealization that accompanied my father's fame seemed the more mysterious to me because he did not seem *personally* different after he became famous. To those close to him my father was—and continued to be—a life-size human being, suffering from all the same difficulties in living that had plagued him in the

years before his celebrity. Despite his brilliance as an analyst and a writer, and his great charisma, he was an insecure man, described as "exceedingly vulnerable" by his friend the analyst Margaret Brenman-Gibson in a reminiscence about him after his death. He evoked in those closest to him a wish to comfort and reassure him; to make him feel that he was worthy and lovable; to help him wrestle with his lifelong feelings of personal inadequacy, his punishing self-doubt.

Once, during my adolescence, when Dad and I were alone together, I burst into tears—brokenhearted over the abrupt ending of a teenage romance. I remember the look of terror and grief on his face—terror because in the context of the family he did not feel like an adult with the ability to soothe and comfort. For these vital functions he looked always to my mother, who was in his eyes the ultimate source of strength and wisdom within the family (if not the universe), the *real* healer, the solver of all problems both practical and personal. On this occasion he could not call to her, as he normally would in anything remotely like a crisis, "*Joan!*" Grief was in his face precisely because he felt so powerless to comfort someone he loved who clearly needed and longed to be comforted by him.

I have recently read a letter that Dad wrote to my brother Jon in the early 1960s, acknowledging how little he had been involved with us when we were children. He wrote,

I left (and always have left) too much to Mom. This . . . had to do with my being an immigrant. She knew everything

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This is a touching statement about his real feelings as a father, but I don't believe that his being an immigrant was the heart of the matter. I think he felt personally ineffectual long before he came to the United States, and had invested my mother with such authority from their first meeting, in Vienna. (My mother, a Canadian by birth, had lived for a number of years in the United States.)

Indeed, my father's self-explanations often struck me as shallow for a man of such deep insight into the emotional lives of others, and I could not help feeling that his brief analysis with Anna Freud had been inadequate for someone who was to make psychoanalysis his life. It was brought to a premature end when my parents emigrated from Vienna to the United

cent suffering, and I felt terrible for having reminded him of his feelings of inadequacy.

I also experienced once again bewilderment that the psychoanalyst who had become famous for understanding and helping people (particularly children and adolescents), and for writing about them with such insight and compassion, was so frightened by my adolescent needs. If he was overwhelmed by my needs, what did that say about me? I redoubled my efforts to protect him from any feelings of mine that might bring that pained expression to his face, and continued to do so for the rest of his life.

HOW was I to reconcile my experience of that emotionally fragile man (who understood so little about his feelings or mine and was terrified by both) with the public image of the intellectual pioneer who had challenged the authority of the great Sigmund Freud, daring to revise some of

Freud's basic assumptions about human nature? How was I to reconcile the picture of the father I knew at home with the image of him as he appeared in public, where he radiated a humble but confident sense of his own ability to understand human behavior and to help others—and where he demonstrated (both in his writing and in his personal style) an exceptional level of comfort in exploring the most intimate human emotions? In the public sphere he was the authority on feelings, and his audience received emotional nourishment and reassurance from him. In my lifelong effort to reconcile the two seemingly disparate facets of my father's personality, I feel I have come to understand something general about the nature of fame.

In the relationship between the public image of a famous person and the private human

being there is *inherently* something profoundly paradoxical. The public image is the reverse of the private person as experienced by him or her self and by intimate others. It might be accurate to say that the public image reflects what the private person most longs to be. It represents an ideal self.

For example, how often have you heard a master entertainer reveal that he or she is shy almost to the point of being socially crippled? David Letterman has talked about what a nerd he felt like in high school, how he couldn't get a date, and how he still feels socially inept, though his television persona is that of a quintessentially cool, relaxed, and witty guy.



States. He never again sought emotional relief, or clarification of his feelings, from psychoanalysis or any other form of psychotherapy. This reflects, I think, his fear of knowing himself, and it perpetuated his limited understanding of his closest relationships and of the sources of his own deepest pain.

That moment in which I sought his comfort illustrates the dilemma of my relationship with my famous father. On that occasion I had been seduced momentarily by the public image, and had asked for something that I knew (and had always known) he could not give—as much as he longed to. The pain this caused him seemed to me much greater than my adoles-

Laurence Olivier—a commanding figure on the stage—was awkward as a young boy and remembers being looked on with contempt by his peers in school, who considered him effeminate and, he later wrote, referred to him as “that sidey little shit Olivier.” In his remarkably candid autobiography, *Confessions of an Actor* (1982), Olivier acknowledged that he continued to feel like that unpopular little schoolboy in adulthood, even after he was knighted by the Queen. He was painfully shy and thought his face “weak.” He was most at ease on the stage, where he could wear a costume and a facial disguise—a fake nose or a moustache or a beard. That afforded him “the shelter of an alien character,” he wrote, and enabled him “to avoid anything so embarrassing as *self-representation*” (italics mine). At parties, where he had to appear as himself, he occasionally fainted from anxiety and had to be carried out of the room.

We all know about the deep connection between comedy and tragedy, but I have never heard it spelled out so clearly as in W. C. Fields’s pronouncement about his good friend Bert Williams—that he was “the funniest man I ever saw, and the saddest man I ever knew.” Charlie Chaplin, a symbol of child-like playfulness on the screen, sometimes did dozens of takes for one of the hilarious and seemingly spontaneous little scenes he created. He drove his fellow actors and the rest of the crew mad with his obsessive perfectionism. Those delightful scenes were born of compulsive misery. And, of course, there is Judy Garland, whose brilliant smile lit up the screen and made her one of the most popular entertainers of our time. We now know that she was desperately unhappy behind that smile, and tried many times to commit suicide. Radiant movie stars who have died essentially of unhappiness are not rarities.

Everyone old enough to remember John Fitzgerald Kennedy can call up the vital image that was such an essential element of his charisma. But Kennedy was in truth a sickly man, whose health problems began at birth; Seymour M. Hersh writes in *The Dark Side of Camelot* (1997) that Kennedy had difficulty feeding as an infant and was often sick. At age two he was hospitalized with scarlet fever, and during the rest of his life there were few days when he wasn’t in pain or seriously ill in some way.

How could our image of JFK have been so different from the reality? In some cases his infirmities actually gave him a heightened appearance of health: the cortisone he took to relieve his health problems is said to have swollen his thin, boyish face, making him look strong and robust; the tan that contributed to his appearance of well-being was actually owing to Addison’s disease, in which the skin can bronze very deeply when exposed to sunlight. But there were also characterological reasons for Kennedy’s powerful aura. Hersh writes,

Kennedy was not merely reluctant to complain about pain and his health but was psychologically unable to do so. “He was heartily ashamed” of his illnesses [an old friend of JFK’s told a biographer]. “They were a mark of effeminacy, of weakness, which he wouldn’t acknowledge. I think all that macho stuff was compensation—all that chasing after women—compensation for something that he hadn’t got.”

This strikes me as a real insight into the public image of a charismatic figure. Kennedy’s public persona was constructed around the denial of shame: he considered his ill health a weakness and put on a show of exemplary good health. Laurence Olivier thought his face was weak, so he wore disguises that helped him to play some of the most compelling figures in the history of the theater. Shame, I have come to think, lies behind an exaggerated public image of strength, confidence, well-being, or benevolence. Great talent is often the vehicle for projecting such a larger-than-life image on the public screen.

Many writers about narcissism (Heinz Kohut, Andrew P. Morrison, and Helen Block Lewis, among others) have suggested that narcissism (or grandiosity) is, essentially, a defense against shame—with shame defined as a sense that the self is deeply flawed or deficient. To feel shame is to experience the self as small, weak, insignificant, powerless, defective. It is the experience of the self as not good enough.

I think it was just such feelings of inadequacy that impelled my father to seek fame; fame did not simply come to him because he was an extraordinarily brilliant thinker and writer, which he certainly was. But from early childhood on I was

Great talent leads to recognition on a grand scale. It is gratifying to command the attention of people with a display of special abilities. But underlying wounds remain unhealed. Fame is not a successful defense against feelings of inadequacy. It only appears to be.

aware that his drive to achieve recognition was monumental. When he did anything other than work, he did it because others—especially my mother—insisted on it. Family friends learned to treat with good humor his disappearances from picnics or parties to find a quiet place where he could read or write. His brilliance was coupled with an overwhelming need to achieve. I suspect that the full realization of great talent is always fueled by such an intense need. And what, exactly, is the source of this drive? An early experience of shame so overwhelming to the sense of self that to become someone extraordinary seems the only way to defend against it.



When a person feels so deeply flawed that he or she cannot imagine ever “fitting in” in human society, a solution is to imagine rising *above* human society. This is the narcissistic solution to shame: If I am not lovable for who I am, I will have to make people admire me for what I can do—and that is how I will make sure that I am never abandoned and alone. The ultimate threat of the experience of shame, after all, is that one will be rejected or ostracized as unworthy of human companionship. And the ultimate motive for seeking extraordinary success, power, or fame is to make sure that this most feared rejection never happens.

LET me suggest some of the early-childhood experiences that can give rise to an overwhelming sense of personal shame. One that is common to superachievers is abandonment or harsh emotional rejection by one or both parents, which leaves a child feeling deeply defective and unlovable.

My father never knew his father, or even who his father was. One of the saddest things about that, from my point of view, is that his mother refused throughout her life to tell him the identity of this all-important person. Her stated reason was that she had promised the man she married when my father



was three that she would never divulge this information. But her explanation conveys a greater concern for someone else's wishes than for my father's aching need to know. Her unwillingness to tell him even after her husband's death felt to him like a painful betrayal.

My father's way of coping with this emotional wound illustrates, again, the connection between feelings of shame and the need for a grandiose self-image. It was my father's fantasy throughout his life that his father might have been a member of the Danish royal family. Relatives still living in Den-

mark suggested that this could have been the case, but the truth has always been and continues to be elusive. What is revealing, I think, is that my father found much comfort in the thought that his father might have been of noble birth; thus an abandoning parent was transformed into a source of pride.

The painful fact was that my father's father never made an effort to know him—if, indeed, he was aware of his son's existence. My father's drive to become famous may well have been, at least in part, an effort to win on a wide scale the attention and admiration that he could not obtain from his fa-

ther. He may even have had the fantasy that his fame would bring him to this elusive man's attention.

Laurence Olivier's father was present during his childhood but "couldn't see the slightest purpose in my existence," Olivier writes. "Everything about me irritated him. . . . The slight disgust that he felt at his first viewing of me seemed to me . . . to last all my boyhood." Charlie Chaplin hardly knew his father, who abandoned his wife and children when Chaplin was still a little boy. More than one biographer has described JFK's mother, Rose Kennedy, as cold and unnurturing with her children; one called her "a literal majordomo: a management executive rather than a mother." After his bout with scarlet fever, little Jack was sent alone to a sanatorium for three months to recover. That must have been a terrible abandonment.

This kind of childhood experience can easily give rise to the belief (part conscious, part unconscious) that in order to secure the love and loyalty of important others, the rejected child must be or do something very special. In that sanatorium, Seymour Hersh tells us, Jack, "torn from his parents and left in the care of strangers, demonstrated the first signs of what would be a lifelong ability to attract attention by charming others. He so captivated his nurse that it was reported that she begged to be allowed to stay with him."

Thus is charisma born. Becoming someone special—being charming, talented (musically, artistically, intellectually, polit-

ically), magnetic—becomes the vehicle for a desperate pursuit of emotional nourishment. It seems the only reliable way to secure care and affection, or to wield any real influence over the feelings and behavior of others. Of course, there is enormous gratification in exercising one's talents for their own sake—a joy in one's mastery of any highly skilled activity. But I would suggest that extraordinary talent is characteristically fueled by a desperate longing for human connection.

In *The Drama of the Gifted Child* (1979), Alice Miller wrote eloquently about another kind of abandonment that is common to a great many superachievers. What we need and long for most as children, she reminded us, is to be loved and accepted for the small, fragile, needy, imperfect beings that we are. But when a mother's narcissistic needs are so great that she cannot relate to her child as he really is, she loves her child as a self-object—that is, as someone put on this earth to meet *her* needs. Her love may be intense, but it doesn't make the child feel loved for himself. In the context of this crucial relationship the child is actually discouraged from experiencing his own feelings and wishes. Instead he is called upon to develop aspects of his personality, and particularly special gifts, that make his mother (or father or other primary caretaker) feel enhanced. This secures the desperately needed love of the caretaker, but may deny the child knowledge, throughout his life, of his *own* needs and desires.

My father's mother perceived him as gifted and took pride in his obvious intelligence. She had become pregnant out of wedlock, had been abandoned by the father of her child, and lived far from home during her pregnancy and the first three years of my father's life (before she married my father's stepfather). This was a lonely and scandalous position in the early 1900s. She needed from my father not only emotional comfort but also help in restoring her damaged pride. She needed him to ennoble her situation with his special gifts. She was an intellectual and an avid reader, and shared that passion with him. She encouraged his pursuit of intellectual interests from an early age. He invested his trust that she would not abandon him, as his father had done, in this bond between them.

So my father was well trained as a small child to deny his own feelings, since his emotionally depleted, depressed mother could not be empathic with them. But he learned to use his intellect to connect with her, to empathize with her, and to gratify *her* needs. It makes sense, then, that as an adult he could be exquisitely attuned to the feelings of others and could, by using his intellect, empathize with and clarify their experiences. Yet his own feelings remained a mystery to him.

When asked "How are you?" he would often look puzzled for a moment, as though unsure how to access information about his state of well-being. And if my mother was nearby, he might consult with her: "Well, Joan, how *are* we?" A similar consultation might be necessary if food was unexpectedly put in front of him—perhaps a bagel or a sweet roll: "Do I want this, Joan?" And as for the real sources of his unremitting self-doubt, they remained an enigma to him.

AFTER AUSCHWITZ

After Auschwitz, no theology:

From the chimneys of the Vatican, white smoke rises—
a sign the cardinals have chosen themselves a Pope.

From the crematoria of Auschwitz, black smoke rises—
a sign the conclave of Gods hasn't yet chosen
the Chosen People.

After Auschwitz, no theology:

the inmates of extermination bear on their forearms
the telephone numbers of God,
numbers that do not answer
and now are disconnected, one by one.

After Auschwitz, a new theology:

the Jews who died in the Shoah
have now come to be like their God,
who has no likeness of a body and has no body.
They have no likeness of a body and they have no body.

—YEHUDA AMICHAI

translated by Chana Bloch and Chana Kronfeld

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Laurence Olivier was doted on by his mother, who was emotionally deprived in her marriage. She adored her son and had great ambitions for him. He began at the age of five to act out plays on a makeshift stage in the nursery. As long as his mother was at home, he remembers, he "never played to an empty house." As for JFK, we know now to what extent his career was driven, orchestrated, and often paid for by his father, who had been thwarted in his own political ambition. Joseph Kennedy insisted that all his children discuss politics at the dinner table and was determined that one of them should become President.

Becoming someone special—being talented, charismatic—becomes the vehicle for a pursuit of emotional nourishment. It seems the only reliable way to secure care and affection, or to wield any real influence over the feelings and behavior of others.

When a parent's feelings of self-worth depend on the accomplishments of a child, this reinforces the child's belief that *only* his exceptional abilities can be relied on to secure the love of someone important to his survival. But at the same time it affirms that those talents are a powerful asset in the quest for connection with others. Such a "gifted" child has had the experience of being important to the one whose love he needs most. The grandiosity behind the most extraordinary performances in any field grows out of this early experience of having felt very special to a parent or another primary caretaker.

GREAT talent, then, leads to recognition on a grand scale. And, of course, it is gratifying to be able to command the attention of large numbers of people with a display of one's special gifts and abilities. But behind the performance of the gifted child—no matter how successful that performance may be—the original narcissistic wound remains unhealed. This, I believe, is not well understood. Fame is not a successful defense against feelings of inadequacy. It only appears to be. This is where the greatest distortion lies in our idealization of the famous. We imagine that our heroes have transcended the adversities of the human condition and have healed their childhood traumas by achievement of the extraordinary. We want to believe that they have arrived at a secure place of self-approval; that achieving recognition—success—can set us all free from gnawing feelings of self-doubt. We want to believe that if we ourselves could just secure enough recognition and approval from the outside world, if we could feel sufficiently ad-

mired, we would be healed and our self-esteem secured. Like the celebrities we admire so much, we would be rescued from the relentless need for validation.

But the truth is that the security of the self is never stable. My father never felt that he had arrived safely anywhere. He continued to feel anxious at the height of his success, uncertain that he could maintain the reputation he had won or that he could write again as well as he had written before. His success rested on gifts that he feared might abandon him. And eventually they did.

The famous live with the constant, terrifying possibility that their special gifts or their celebrity will vanish, exposing them as the insecure mortals they are in their own experience. The horror of such exposure is exquisitely portrayed in *The Wizard of Oz*, when the Wizard's façade is stripped away and he is revealed as an ordinary man with profound feelings of inadequacy.

Public applause and admiration are intoxicating while they last. More than that, they are addictive, creating an appetite for the heightened feeling of acceptance that comes with being adored and revered. But when the applause was over, my father experienced a letdown, a feeling of abandonment, a depression, that diminished his pleasure in everyday living. After one has been publicly celebrated and is again in the privacy of home, the sense of isolation can be the more acute because of its contrast with that exhilarating moment when one felt like the center of the universe. And there is always the haunting question Will I ever get that kind of affirmation again? Will my next performance (or my next creation) be received with the same excitement as my last?

In a recent television biography of Leonard Bernstein his adult children described the depression that came over him after a concert tour. It was torture for him to be alone. He needed the applause so desperately that it prevented him from composing the serious music he had always believed was in him. The tragedy of his career was that he never felt his work was good enough. He had wanted to be another Gustav Mahler. This revelation touched me deeply, because my father never felt he had achieved enough either. He had wanted to be another Sigmund Freud.

To know a famous person well is to know what cherished fantasies that person has *not* fulfilled. My father spoke wistfully of the Nobel Prize, believing, I think, that this exalted form of recognition would finally convince him that his work was genuinely important. Yet our house was full of plaques and honorary degrees and awards, including a Pulitzer Prize, that had failed to secure for him the true sense of accomplishment for which he longed.

If enormous success like my father's is not a reliable cure

for feelings of inadequacy, then what is the road to self-esteem? I would propose that self-esteem is experienced in the context of authentic interpersonal encounters in which the self is revealed and acknowledged rather than obscured by idealized self-images. This is the model of a truly intimate interpersonal relationship, including, of course, the analytic relationship. The real cure for shame is a gradual willingness to expose to others what you are most ashamed of, and the discovery that you will not be cast out for making your shameful self known—that you are still a member in good standing of the human community. You are acceptable for who you are.

When you have created a public image that denies your private experience of yourself—one that is, in important ways, the reverse of the shameful self—the contrast between the two creates feelings of personal fraudulence. I think my father suffered terribly because he could not in his intimate relationships be what his image suggested he would be. More than once he expressed the hope that we his children would feel nourished by his success, because he knew that his career had received most of his attention.

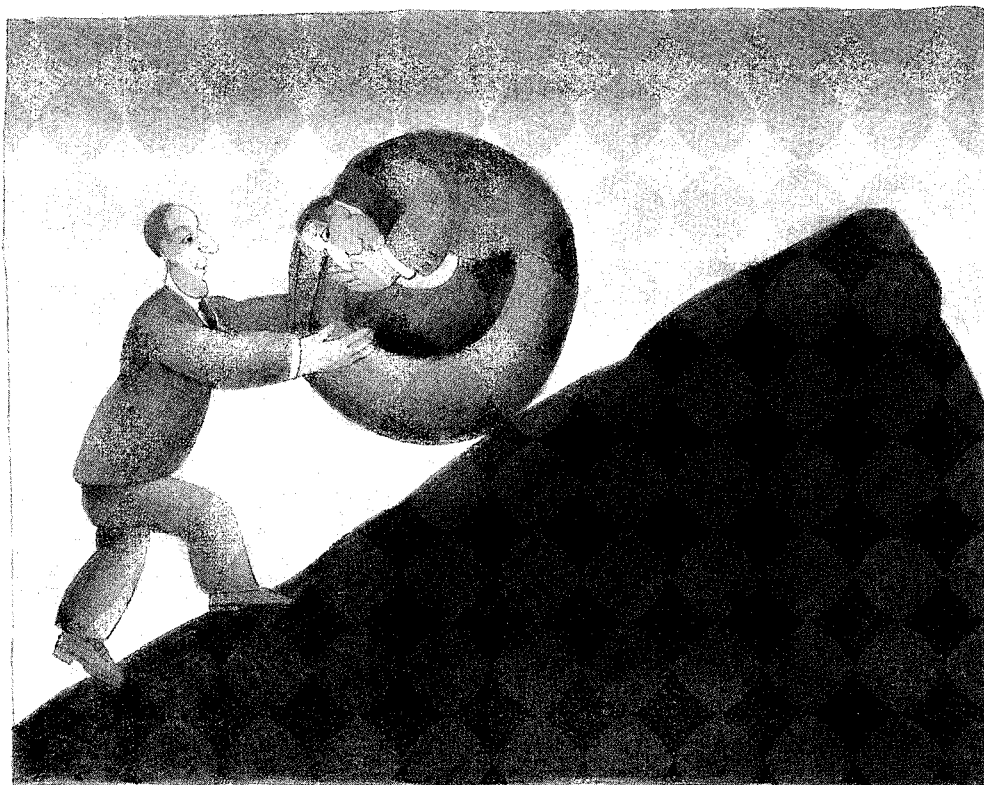
Fame does, of course, have a powerful impact on the personal relationships of the celebrity. But it is not so easy to distinguish the effects of fame from the effects of the narcissistic disturbance that motivated the achievement of that fame. My longing to connect with my father was thwarted by his need to avoid feelings of inadequacy—by the defenses he had developed early on to ward off shame and depression—and not by his fame.

In the interaction when I surprised both of us by bursting into tears, he was unable to comfort me, and that was painful for both of us. But what made it especially disappointing and confusing was that Dad's fame—particularly his idealized image as a father figure—engendered fantasies in both of us: he *should* be the perfect father, and I *should* be the ideal daughter that one would expect a perfect father to have. We were both drawn to the illusion of specialness that his public image seemed to offer us. As a result, the experience of disconnection left us both feeling more deeply flawed and ashamed. When we were in public, we often tried to act as if we felt the special connection that we knew his image prescribed. Fame enhances the desire to hide feelings of deficiency. It enhanced the family tendency to hide many things.

More than once my mother explained to me that neither of

my parents could consider further psychoanalysis because of their need to protect my father's reputation. She was unwavering in her commitment to his image—a shared illusion, after all—and in her distrust that anyone in the field could be counted on to keep their personal secrets. As a result they endured even traumatic misfortune without seeking professional help.

That made it particularly difficult for me to begin my own psychotherapy, years ago. As much as I longed to be the recipient—*finally*—of the kind of nourishment that others had gotten from my father in the analytic setting, I was also plagued with feelings of guilt at exposing his imperfection—and to a



member of his own profession! (The guilt was amplified, of course, by a secret yearning to shout it from the rooftops.) As a result of this emotionally charged issue I had to be reassured more than most about the confidentiality of the therapeutic relationship. I knew how important it was to my father—and to those who idealized him—that I not impose reality on a mutually gratifying fantasy that he was the quintessential father.

SO why are we mortals so eager to idealize the famous—to suppose that the public image is an accurate reflection of the celebrity's private self? Ernest Becker wrote, in *The Denial of Death* (1973),

The thing that has to be explained in human relations is precisely the *fascination of the person* who holds or symbolizes power. There is something about him that seems to radiate out to others and to melt them into his aura, a "fascinating effect" . . . of "the narcissistic personality" or, as Jung preferred to call him, the "mana-personality." But

people don't actually radiate blue or golden auras. The mana-personality may try to work up a gleam in his eye or a special mystification of painted signs on his forehead, a costume, and a way of holding himself, but he is still *Homo sapiens*, standard vintage, practically indistinguishable from others unless one is especially interested in him. The mana of the mana-personality is in the eyes of the beholder; the fascination is in the one who experiences it.

Freud was the first to illuminate the phenomenon we call transference, whereby we transfer feelings we have had toward our parents to the person of the physician. In transference the grown person experiences the feelings of a child—a child who distorts his perception of reality to relieve his feelings of helplessness, to make himself feel safe.

Becker expands on this theme: we frail human beings occupy an overpowering universe. We have little control over the forces of nature or life and death. We are born small and helpless, and we continue to feel small, often powerless to affect our fate. Man is the only animal that is burdened with the unbearable knowledge that he will die.

The purpose of setting up figures who seem superpowerful, infinitely wise or infinitely kind, larger than life itself, is to make us feel safe.

The psychoanalyst W. R. D. Fairbairn was one of the first to describe how this process begins in childhood. Every child needs to maintain an exaggerated belief in the competence and benevolence of his parents. Children are quick to deny their own perceptions of reality in order to protect this idealized parental image. When parenting is inadequate or even abusive, the child takes the blame on himself: I am bad, and therefore deserve any mistreatment I get. In this way, Fairbairn points out, the child purchases outer security at the price of inner security.

In adulthood we idealize the famous as a way of sustaining the belief we held as children that we are protected by people more powerful and capable than ourselves in a world too frightening to endure without the comfort of this illusion. I doubt that it is psychologically possible to give up our emotional dependence on heroes. An idealized view of our parents, teachers, mentors, and leaders is an essential force in our sense of emotional well-being and in our capacity for emotional growth throughout our lives. And it plays an indispensable part in social organization and in history. Nevertheless, I believe it is important to acknowledge the cost to interpersonal relationships of this human compulsion to idealize.

I have witnessed the way successful and able adults become childlike in the presence of a father figure, giving over to him their power and authority and diminishing their sense of personal importance in the process of magnifying his. When we grant another person the status of hero, we instinctively protect his claim to superiority by denying our own full potential for empowerment. Too often in history people have

exposed themselves and others to great harm by suspending their own judgment in the adulation of a charismatic leader like Adolf Hitler or Jim Jones. And the danger of personal abuse is present in all relationships in which the judgment of one participant is suspended out of a need to idealize the other. Even under the most benign circumstances adulation dulls our awareness of the human dimensions of those we idealize, limiting our knowledge of them and of ourselves as human beings. The cost is a loss of genuine connection between worshipper and worshipped.

But Becker deepens our understanding of what is nevertheless invaluable about transference or idealization as a way of coping with the human condition. He writes that transference is also

a natural attempt to be healed and to be whole, through heroic self-expansion in the "other." . . . People create the reality they need in order to discover themselves. . . . If transference represents the natural heroic striving for a "beyond" that gives self-validation and if people need this validation in order to live, then [idealization] . . . is necessary and desirable for self-fulfillment. Otherwise man is overwhelmed by his loneliness and separation and negated by the very burden of his own life. . . . What makes transference heroics demeaning is that the process is unconscious and reflexive, not fully in one's control.

Nor can it ever be. But we can strive to be more aware of idealization wherever it occurs in our relationships—to make it a less reflexive part of our way of relating. This is the essence of the struggle to release ourselves from our childhood ties to our parents, to individuate, to accept a greater sense of separateness and independence in the world, and to experience ourselves as powerful rather than projecting our power onto others. We can try to be aware of our need to idealize as well as our need to *be* idealized. How much do we invest in the illusion that fame or success heals? How much do we hide behind the illusion that we are somehow larger than life, out of fear of acknowledging to others how needy and inadequate we sometimes feel?

The need to appear larger than life—like the need to believe in the superhuman status of others—helps us to cope in a frightening universe, but it also limits our capacity for intimacy. When feelings of shame are concealed by withdrawal from communication or by the creation of a false or grandiose façade, the potential for real healing of our childhood wounds, or for the achievement of a more authentic self-acceptance and acceptance of those closest to us, is blocked. Conversely, a willingness to reveal how fundamentally human we really are—in our feelings of inadequacy, unworthiness, and shame as well as of personal strength, pride, and self-acceptance—can help us to feel more authentic to ourselves and to others, and can draw us together in appreciation of what it means to be a member of this flawed but wonderful species. ☞

LOVE NIPS OF THE BOA

Secret despoiler of herds,
he works by guile and cunning. Noiseless,
with hardly a flicker of overt motion in attack,
he starves the calves by siphoning off—in shrewd calm,
that numbing soothe and hypnotic caress—the milk of mothers . . .

The slithering boa glides through knotholes in pine boards, barely

rustles the dense haystack it pierces, and comes up under

the half-asleep cows to stroke their bloated udders

with gentlest forked-tongue lappings; bovine

light sleepers that might be blasted

from a lull of slumber's

trance by least skirry

of field mice brushing their forelegs

or tails, now drawn from sleep into uttermost

removes by this gentlest slurp & suction, baby calf's

touch never so rhythmic and lightly stupefying. Mother cows

cannot know how it is that they're swiftly milked, O resistlessly

depleted and robbed of their throbbing loads. Amazing it be,

so small of mass are the boas, but they can engorge

their swelled tubular length to nearly double-

thick expanse of their normal girth

with the imbibed milk,

as if they've swallowed

a whole litter of baby rabbits, coons,

or possums in a few gulps—as well they might.

A boa's whole body is a throat. Its brain is so far
uptunnel from its tail, one end ignores the other's limits—
stuff, stuff it in: that's the only message! Then, lumbering away

like a gluttonous skunk or possum that has supped on twice

its body weight, the boa drags its overstuffed yards-

long belly, then burrows under the haystack

to hiddenly sleep off its gorged daze

of satiety . . . The farmers,

distraught by those false

milking, freakish drainoff of prize

cows' mammaries, guess the culprits. They sweep

sharp-edged machetes through suspicious long bulges

under barnstraw, a wavering or trembling of the haypiles

as if the hay itself took breath: insucks & outflows, faint wave
motions rippling across low flat haystack is the giveaway . . .

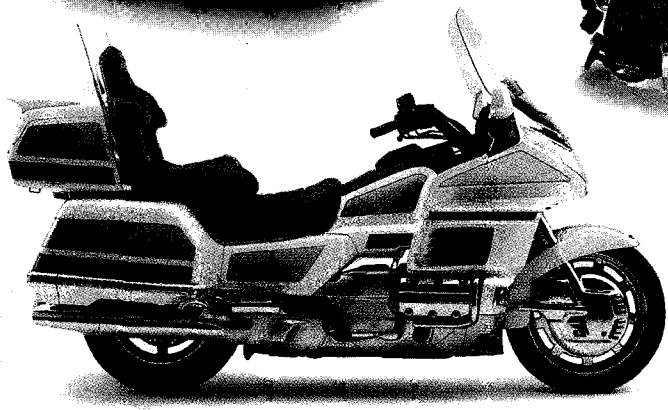
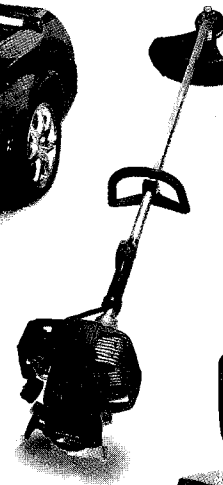
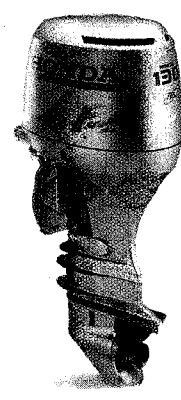
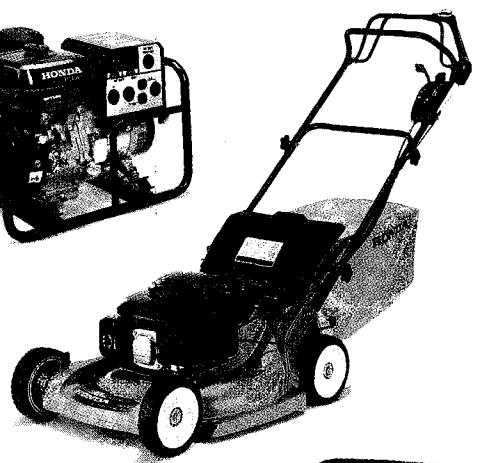
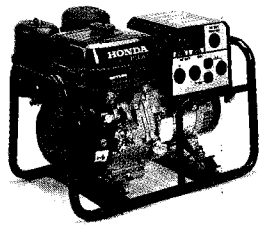
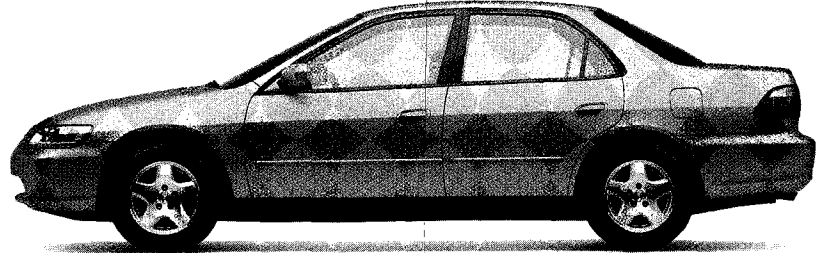
Cutlass slashes dozing snake's milk-pouchy innards,

clipped sides twitchy like two live offspring—

but no, they're dying severed pipe lengths

stunned into a death dance.

—LAURENCE LIEBERMAN



From the top left by row: XR400R, Accord EX V-6 Sedan, portable generator, Honda Harmony™ lawnmower, BF130 outboard, FourTrax® Foreman® ES, Acura NSX, string trimmer, snowblower, Gold Wing® SE, Honda Masters™ lawn tractor. ©1999 American Honda Motor Co., Inc. www.honda.com

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The Wrong Man

by ALAN BERLOW

The prospect that innocent people will be executed in America is horrifyingly likely, the author argues in this unsparing report on the criminal-justice system. Police officers and prosecutors have suppressed evidence. Many public defenders are incompetent. And the appeals process is becoming more difficult

It is better to risk saving a guilty person than to condemn an innocent one.

—Voltaire

ON the afternoon of February 25, 1983, a sunny, dimple-cheeked little girl named Jeanine Nicarico reportedly heard a knock on the front door of the comfortable split-level house where she, her two older sisters, and their parents lived in Naperville, a Chicago suburb. The ten-year-old, home from school with the flu, listened through the door as a man said his car had broken down and he needed help. Jeanine, dressed in a nightgown picturing one of Snow White's dwarfs, with the words "I'm Sleepy," told him she was all alone and couldn't let him in. The man kicked in the front door, carried Jeanine to an upstairs bedroom, wrapped her in a sheet, and taped a towel around her eyes. Her body was discovered forty-eight hours later, less than two miles from the house. An autopsy revealed that she had been sodomized and that her skull had been crushed by a blunt instrument.

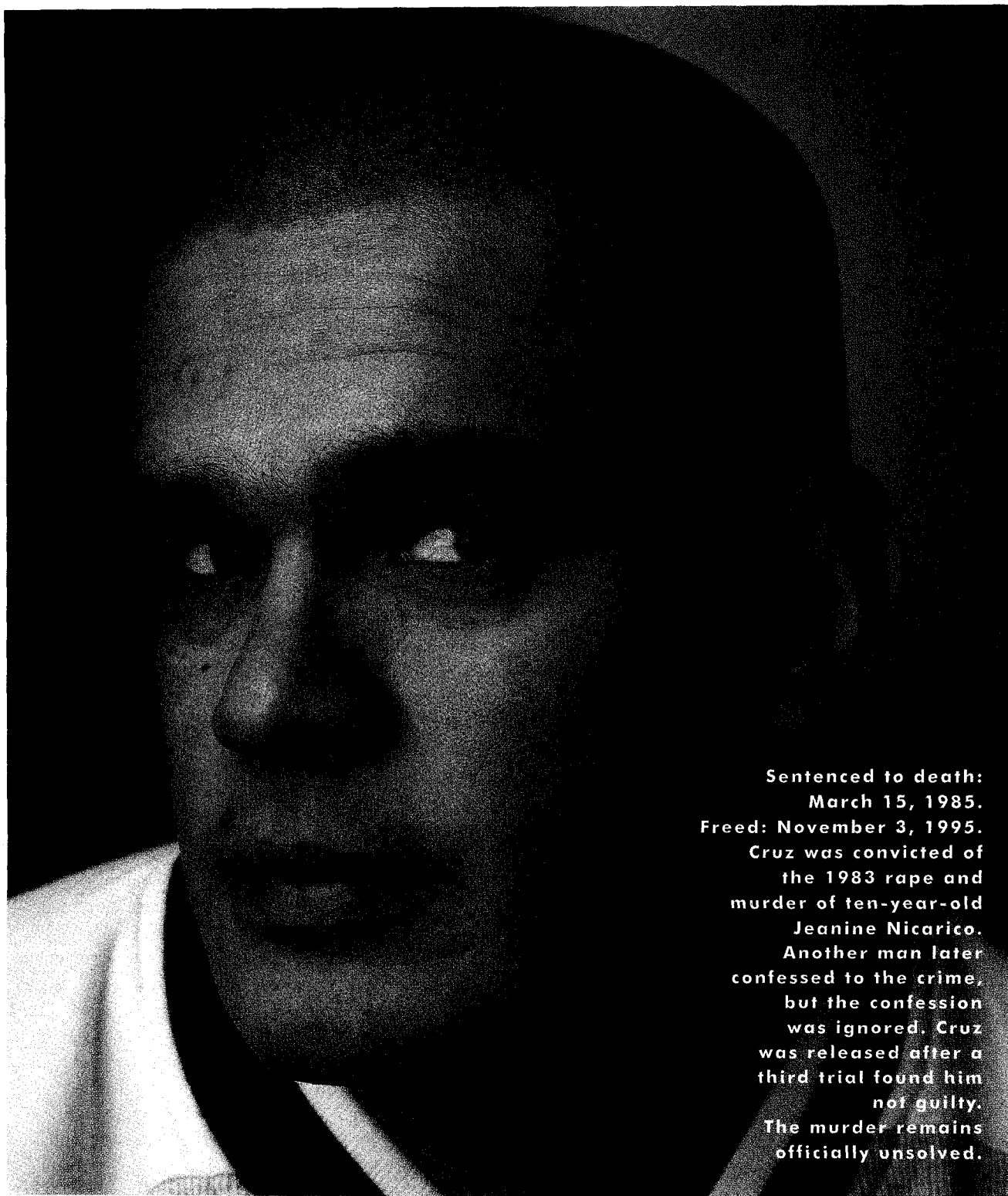
The Nicarico murder is every parent's worst nightmare, one that Thomas and Patricia Nicarico have lived with for the past sixteen years. It's the kind of case that leads 75 percent of Americans to support the death penalty. For nearly as many years Rolando Cruz has lived with another kind of nightmare. On February 22, 1985, Cruz was convicted of murder, rape, deviant sexual assault, kidnapping, and burglary in the Jeanine Nicarico murder trial. Despite the fact that the police found no physical evidence linking him to the victim, a judge sentenced Cruz to die by lethal injection. Because of a prosecutorial error, the Illinois Supreme Court ordered a second trial for Cruz, and in February of 1990 he was again found guilty and sentenced to death. That verdict was overturned in 1994. Then, on November 3, 1995, as a third trial got under way, one of the police officers who had provided critical evidence

against Cruz acknowledged that he had lied under oath. The judge ordered a directed verdict of not guilty, and Rolando Cruz, having spent nearly twelve years in jail, was a free man.

The policeman's revelation alone didn't prove that Cruz was not guilty, but by then the state's case was a shambles. DNA evidence had all but eliminated Cruz as a suspect in the rape, and implicated another man, Brian Dugan, who, astonishingly, had claimed ten years earlier that he raped and killed Jeanine Nicarico. Dugan had also confessed to five other vicious crimes, including the rape and murder of a seven-year-old girl. Those confessions were credible enough for prosecutors in nearby Kane and LaSalle Counties, who used them to win Dugan's conviction and two consecutive life terms without parole. But the state attorney for DuPage County, James Ryan, now the Illinois attorney general, was convinced that Dugan was lying, and Illinois prosecutors fought for another decade to keep Dugan's testimony out of court while they tried Cruz twice more. They continued with their case despite the resignation of one of their own detectives, who was so certain of the state's error that he had offered to testify for the defense in Cruz's first trial. And they pressed on even after an assistant attorney general, too, resigned, protesting that the state was attempting to execute an innocent man. To date the Nicarico murder remains officially unsolved.

"The Worst Kind of Mistake"

WHY prosecutors were so zealous in their pursuit of Cruz has been a matter of considerable speculation. Clearly, there was enormous public and political pressure on the state attorney's office to solve the highly publicized Nicarico case; it is quite possible that the police and prosecutors became convinced of Cruz's guilt before they had accumulated the facts to prove it, and then stuck with their



Sentenced to death:
March 15, 1985.
Freed: November 3, 1995.
Cruz was convicted of
the 1983 rape and
murder of ten-year-old
Jeanine Nicarico.
Another man later
confessed to the crime,
but the confession
was ignored. Cruz
was released after a
third trial found him
not guilty.
The murder remains
officially unsolved.

hunch even as the holes in their case multiplied. Short of unimpeachable exculpatory evidence, prosecutors are loath to back away from an indictment, much less a conviction. No doubt Cruz shares responsibility for his lengthy ordeal, because he foolishly sought to sell the police a fabricated story about the murder in exchange for a \$10,000 reward, thereby

ROLANDO CRUZ



injecting himself into a situation he might otherwise have avoided. If law-enforcement officials had any doubt about Cruz's guilt, it presumably evaporated with the jury's guilty verdict in the defendant's first trial. When that verdict was set aside, prosecutors probably satisfied themselves that the court's decision turned on nothing more than a technicality.

Spotted by Bob Hambly

By the time Cruz's third trial rolled around, even the exculpatory DNA evidence was insufficient to shake the prosecution's belief in the rightness of its cause. Even today the leading prosecutors and police officers in the Cruz case insist that he was involved in the crime.

If Rolando Cruz were the only person ever mistakenly condemned to death in the United States, one could find any number of ways to explain his case away. But since the Supreme Court reinstated the death penalty, in 1976, more than eighty death-row inmates have been freed from prison, their convictions overturned by evidence of innocence. That may not sound like many, given the huge U.S. prison population, but it is more than one percent of the 6,000 men and women who were sentenced to death in that same period, and equal to almost 15 percent of those actually executed—not good odds for the defendants, given the stakes. The reasons for these miscarriages of justice range from simple police and prosecutorial error to the most outrageous misconduct, such as the framing of innocent people, and everything in between: perjured testimony, erroneous eyewitness testimony, false confessions (including the confessions of innocent defendants), racial bias, incompetent defense counsel, and overzealous police officers and prosecutors who may or may not genuinely believe they have the perpetrator of a heinous crime. Taken together, these miscarriages are not only shocking but also a powerful indictment of the way our criminal-justice system operates, particularly with regard to those at the margins of American society. Although we have no way of knowing how many innocent people remain on death row, or how many are serving life or other lengthy prison sentences for crimes they didn't commit, surely the number of innocent people discovered and freed from prison is only a small fraction of those still incarcerated. The other unanswered question is, of course, how many, if any, innocent people have actually been put to death.

Opponents of the death penalty believe that the execution of an innocent person would have a profound impact on public support for capital punishment. In England several wrongful executions played a crucial role in the decision, in 1964, to abolish the death penalty for murder. The execution of an innocent man in Michigan led to abolition in that state in 1846. Death-penalty supporters in this country have invested considerable energy in reassuring the public that the execution of an innocent person is virtually impossible. William G. Otis, formerly a special counsel to President George Bush and now an adjunct professor of law at George Mason University, in Virginia, says, "The administration of the death penalty ought to be, and in my view in fact is, surrounded with the most elaborate and exacting sort of safeguards of any decision that the government makes, and properly so." Paul G. Cassell, a professor of law at the University of Utah and a leading advocate of capital punishment, is even more categorical. "There is no documented case," he says, "of a factually innocent per-

son who has been executed for at least the last fifty years." Ironically, it is the safeguards Otis refers to—the often time-consuming constitutional and legal challenges to convictions and death sentences—that death-penalty supporters have successfully undermined during the past decade, thereby increasing the likelihood of executing an innocent person.

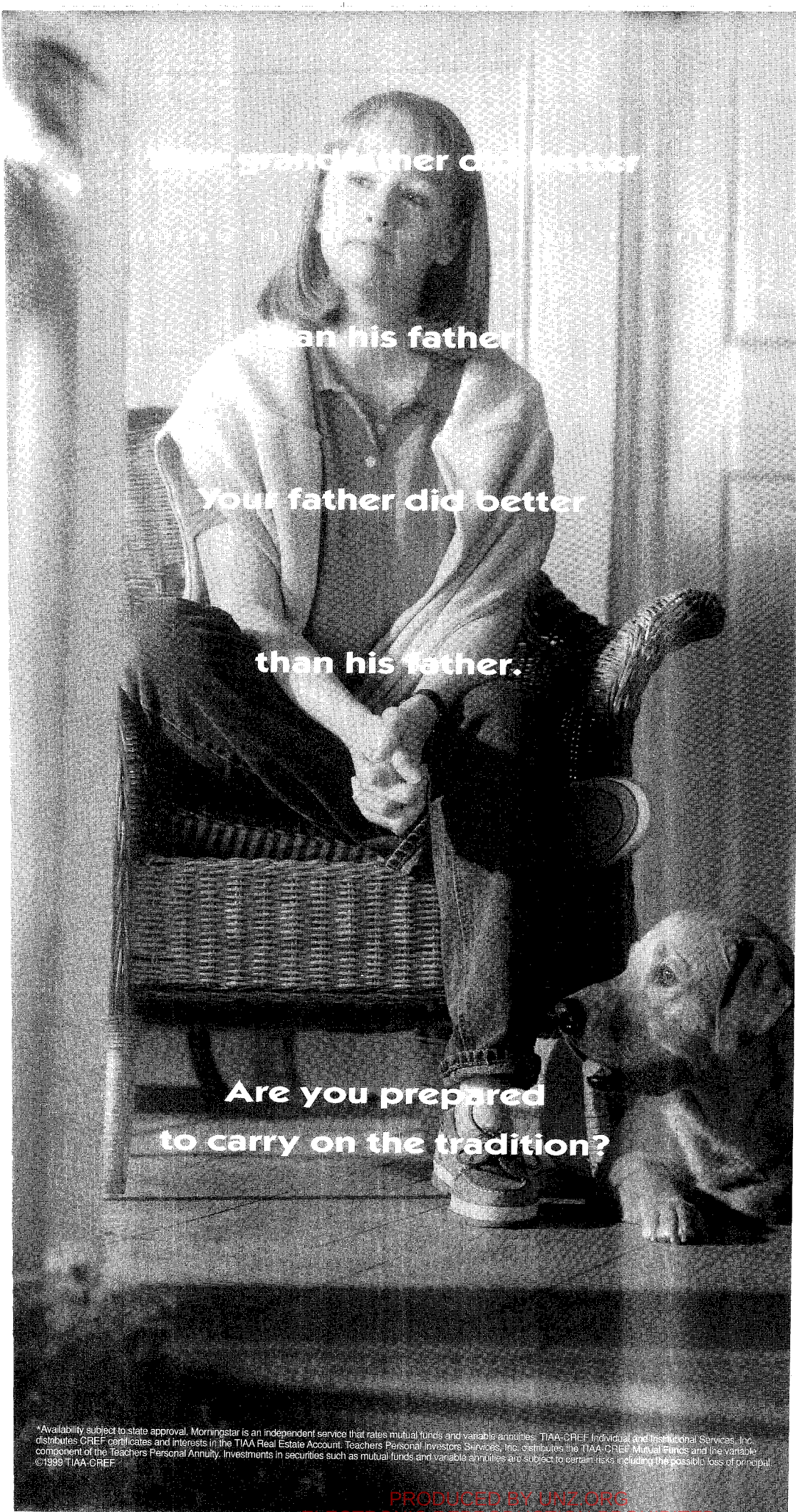
Proving that an innocent person has been executed is difficult. Once a convicted murderer is dead, few people have any incentive to pursue claims of innocence. Witnesses and evidence disappear, memories fade, and defense resources that may have been marshaled to save a life evaporate. Nevertheless, a handful of cases over the past decade have raised troubling questions as to whether the person executed was guilty "beyond a reasonable doubt."

Since 1963 at least 381 homicide convictions nationwide have been overturned because prosecutors concealed evidence of innocence or presented evidence they knew to be false.

Last December, Florida Supreme Court Justice Gerald Kogan said he had "grave doubts" that at least two people executed during his twelve years on the bench were guilty. In one of the most controversial capital cases to reach the Supreme Court, the late Justice Harry A. Blackmun pointed out that the condemned man had an affidavit from a former state judge swearing that his own client, and not the defendant, was the actual killer. "The execution of a person who can show that he is innocent comes perilously close to simple murder," Blackmun wrote in 1993 in a dissenting opinion.

The 1992 execution of Roger Coleman remains controversial even today. Only hours before Coleman was scheduled to die in Virginia's electric chair, Governor Douglas Wilder allowed the condemned man to take a polygraph test. Coleman flunked and was executed later the same day. "If he had passed it," Wilder said at the time, "it obviously could have—could have—influenced my decision [about clemency]." Aside from the fact that some polygraph experts claim that administration of a test under such extreme stress would make it virtually worthless, Wilder's action suggested to many people that he had at least some doubt about Coleman's guilt—raising the question of why he allowed the execution to proceed. Today Wilder says he is absolutely certain that Coleman was guilty.

Doubts about the guilt of capital offenders have also been raised by jurors who learned after an execution of evidence they hadn't heard during the trial, and by others intimately involved with the fate of capital defendants. Don Cabana, a former warden of the Mississippi state prison, who presided over the 1987 execution of Edward Earl Johnson, says he believes that Johnson was probably innocent. Howard Marsellus, a for-



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mer chairman of the Louisiana pardon board, admits that he was responding to political pressure when he voted, in 1984, to execute Timothy Baldwin, a man he believed was innocent of the bludgeoning death of an eighty-five-year-old woman. "I'm guilty as sin," Marsellus says. "I did something morally wrong. I gave in to the prestige and power, the things that went with my job. I knew what the governor, the man who appointed me, wanted: no recommendation for clemency in any death case." Marsellus says he is haunted by Baldwin's execution. "The man walked in [to the execution chamber], grabbed the microphone, and looked dead in my face and said, 'Y'all are about to execute an innocent man and someday you'll have to answer for this.' Man, I will carry this to my grave."

Indisputable evidence that an innocent person has been executed in recent years has yet to be produced. But the close calls, as much as any actual execution, expose a myriad of potentially lethal fault lines in the administration of death sentences.

In 1972, in the case of *Furman v. Georgia*, the Supreme Court ruled 5-4 that the death penalty as then administered violated the Eighth Amendment's proscription against cruel and unusual punishment and the Fourteenth Amendment's equal-protection clause. Individual justices in the majority found much they didn't like about the death penalty. They said that it was disproportionately applied to the "poor and despised," that it was frequently imposed on the "constitutionally impermissible basis of race," and that it was applied in an "arbitrary and capricious" fashion. Although one can make a compelling case that all these criticisms remain valid today, the Supreme Court has since rejected them. The Court has said, however, that it is concerned about the *risk* of imposing an arbitrary sentence as well as about the proven fact of one. Even Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, a vigorous death-penalty proponent, stated in a 1985 decision that a sentence would have to be struck down if it created "an unacceptable risk that 'the death penalty [had been] meted out arbitrarily or capriciously' or through 'whim . . . or mistake.'" If nothing else, the wrongful sentencing to death of more than eighty innocent people would seem to suggest that there remains something both arbitrary and capricious about the way the death penalty has been administered since *Furman*. "If you have this many mistakes, you can't say we're only executing guilty people," argues Richard Dieter, the director of the Death Penalty Information Center, in Washington, D.C., a non-profit research organization. "These cases illustrate the possibility of making the worst kind of mistake."

Accumulating Aberrations

JOHAN Justice, the former president of the National District Attorneys Association, and like-minded supporters of capital punishment don't dispute that innocent people have been sentenced to death. But they insist that wrongful death sentences are aberrations. "The system is not perfect," says Justice, a South Carolina district attorney, arguing that "the reversals prove that the system works."

Governor George Ryan, of Illinois, advanced the same argument—"The system does work and . . . the checks and balances are there"—last February, when his state released Anthony Porter from death row after a group of Northwestern University journalism students working with a private investigator proved that Porter was innocent and obtained a videotaped confession from the actual murderer. But as details of Porter's wrongful sixteen-year incarceration emerged, the governor apparently began having second thoughts about Illinois justice. Police officers involved in Porter's case allegedly ignored suspects identified by a relative of one victim and pressured witnesses and other suspects to testify against Porter. Porter's lawyer acknowledged that he had barely conducted any investigation, because his client's family had come up with only part of his fee. Porter, who has an IQ of 51, came within forty-eight hours of execution by lethal injection in September of last year. He was granted a reprieve so that the state could determine whether he was mentally competent to be executed. Had his IQ been 50 points higher, he would almost certainly be dead.

Governor Ryan recently told reporters that he's "not sure the system worked" in the Porter case. "I think everybody understands what's at stake here," Ryan said. "An innocent man was about to die, and thank God he didn't. And now we want to make sure that scenario doesn't . . . come back and haunt us in the future." But Ryan knows as well as anyone that this scenario has reappeared repeatedly in Illinois. Since 1994 ten innocent people have been discovered on the state's death row. Porter's was actually the second Illinois case to be demolished by Northwestern students taking an investigative-reporting class. In 1996 students helped to establish the innocence of four Chicago black men convicted in a 1978 rape and murder involving a young white couple. Dennis Williams, Verneal Jimerson, Kenneth Adams, and Willie Raines spent a combined sixty-five years in prison. Williams and Jimerson spent fifteen and eleven years respectively on death row. In an effort to prevent erroneous death sentences in the future, the Illinois legislature recently passed, and Governor Ryan signed into law, legislation to increase funding for capital defenders and to require that they meet basic standards of competency.

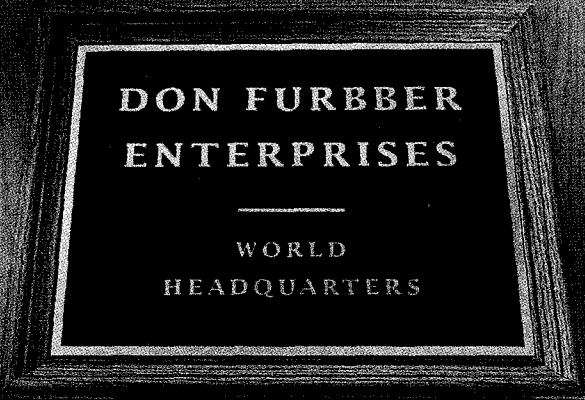
Not surprisingly, Williams, Anthony Porter, and many of the other inmates released from death row over the past two decades are unforgiving of the system's imperfections. Williams says the State of Illinois "attempted to murder me." Immediately after his release Porter told reporters that he'd been "railroaded" by the Chicago police.

That law-enforcement authorities would plot to have a man executed for a crime he didn't commit is probably the most Kafkaesque scenario imaginable for the U.S. justice system—a scenario that gives paranoids and conspiracy theorists a good name. But even if former death-row inmates truly believe they were framed by police officers and prosecutors, such claims are nearly impossible to prove. In the Rolando Cruz case a special prosecutor, William Kunkle, actually indicted four policemen and three former prosecutors for falsely ac-



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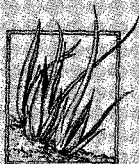
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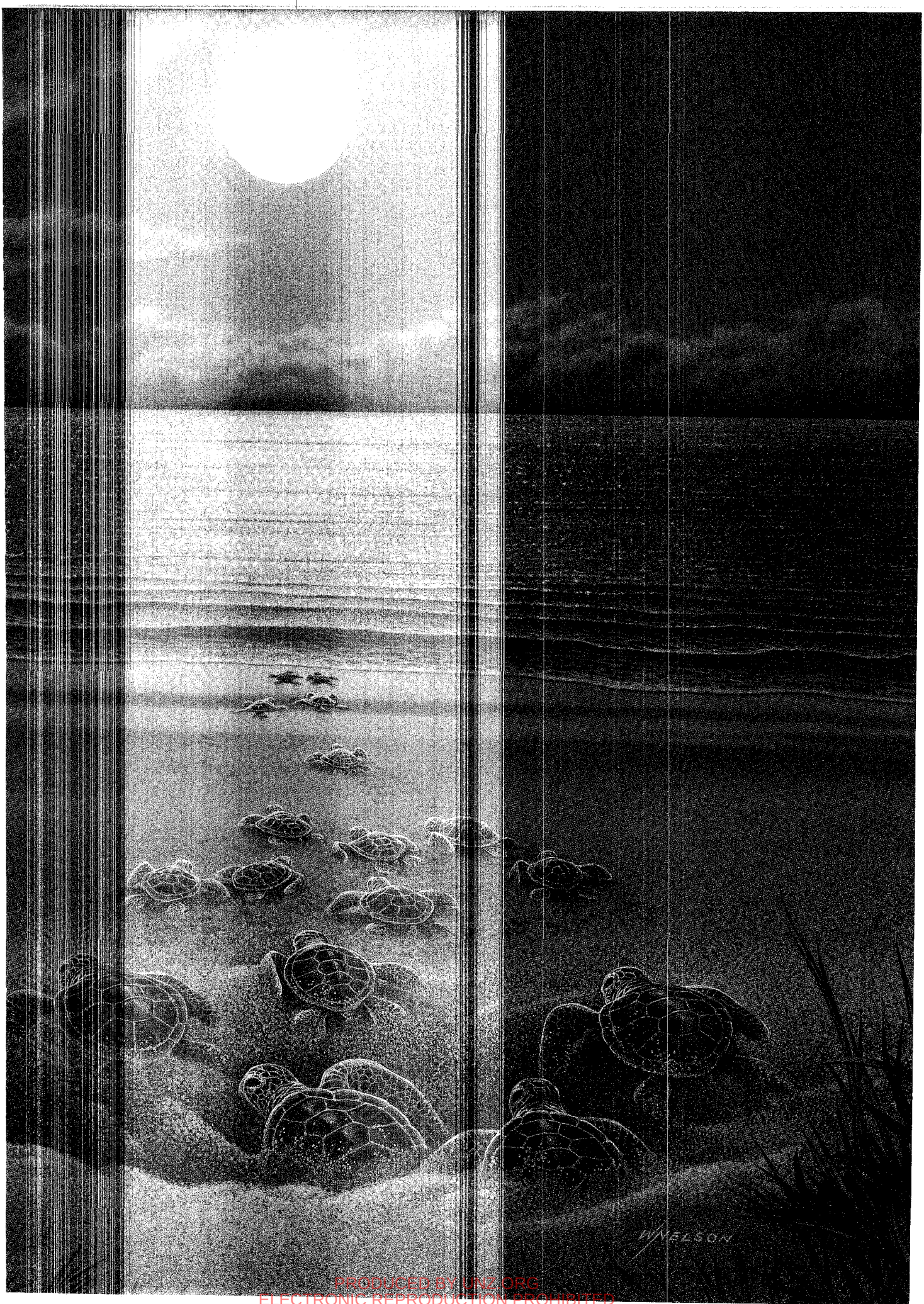
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cusing Cruz, charging them with perjury and obstruction of justice. But this is believed to be the only death-penalty case in U.S. history that has led to such high-level indictments, and earlier this year all the defendants were acquitted.

True, courts have frequently ordered murder convictions overturned as a result of official misconduct. But a *Chicago Tribune* investigation published earlier this year found that since 1963 at least 381 homicide convictions nationwide have been overturned because prosecutors concealed evidence of innocence or presented evidence they knew to be false. Not one of those prosecutors has been convicted of a crime or barred from practicing law. Although law-enforcement officials invariably insist that miscreants in their ranks should be punished, in practice prosecutors rarely find any reason to investigate, let alone indict, their colleagues. Under existing law, law-enforcement officials are virtually immune from civil and criminal liability. "If a prosecutor withholds evidence, it's not a crime," says Bennett L. Gershman, a professor at Pace Law School, in White Plains, New York, and the author of *Trial Error and Misconduct*. "The fact is that criminal prosecutions of prosecutors for matters relating to their professional responsibilities in American law are virtually unknown, inconceivable, unthinkable." Gershman believes that there are hundreds of cases of prosecutorial abuse each year, but says that the Justice Department acts on only one or two, "as if to show that they're really being vigorous and diligent in their oversight." And he insists that the same lax oversight prevails among the states. As for the bar associations, which are supposed to discipline their members, Gershman says they are far too timid to take on prosecutors.

The Justice Department contends that instances of prosecutorial misconduct represent a minute percentage of the tens of thousands of criminal cases brought each year. And there is no question that the public generally sees prosecutors as "white hats" who are working to rid our streets of certifiable bad guys like the Unabomber and Timothy McVeigh, who in a single act of terror murdered 168 people in Oklahoma City. Undoubtedly, the country's prisons contain many dangerous predators who are actually guilty of the crimes of which they were convicted, and most of those sentenced to death committed unspeakable acts.

But whether or not one believes that the system works fairly most of the time, there is no denying that innocent people have been found on death row, and that many owe their freedom to factors having little to do with a properly functioning system of justice. The innocence of James Richardson, who was sentenced to death in Florida for the murder of his seven children, was established only after someone broke into a prosecutor's office and stole a file on the case which showed that the state had suppressed evidence of Richardson's innocence and that key witnesses, including a local sheriff, had lied under oath. Richardson spent twenty-one years in prison for a crime he didn't commit. No law-enforcement official was ever held accountable.

Rolando Cruz owes his life to Brian Dugan, who told the police about his own involvement in the Nicarico murder only to escape the death penalty. Joseph Burrows spent five years on death row for murdering an elderly man in 1988. He was freed after the key witness against him, Gayle Potter, was persuaded by a conservative Republican pro-death-penalty lawyer to tell the truth: that *she* had committed the murder. Most murderers never confess to their crimes, and it's fair to assume that most don't care if innocent people are executed in their place.

Walter McMillian, a black Alabaman who spent six years on death row for murdering an eighteen-year-old white woman, probably owes his freedom to a judge who was determined to have him executed. McMillian, who was dating a white woman at the time of his arrest, was sent to death row before even being tried. Although he had no prior felony record and twelve alibi witnesses placed him at a church fundraiser at the time of the murder, a jury convicted him of murder after a trial lasting a day and a half and sentenced him to life in prison without parole. But that wasn't good enough for Judge Robert E. Lee Key Jr., who overruled the jury. Citing the "vicious and brutal killing of a young lady in the first full flower of adulthood," Key condemned McMillian to die in Alabama's electric chair.

Today Judge Key says he doesn't want to talk about the McMillian case, and volunteers that McMillian "had one of the finest criminal attorneys in the state of Alabama representing him—a black attorney, by the way." Key says, "I'll go to my grave believing [McMillian] was guilty as hell." What Key doesn't say is that he had the trial moved from a county that was 40 percent black to one that was 13 percent black; that prosecutors withheld exculpatory evidence; that the state's principal witness avoided a capital murder charge by testifying against McMillian; that other witnesses were paid thousands of dollars for their false testimony; that the state's three primary witnesses all later recanted; and that the State of Alabama eventually admitted it had made a terrible mistake. Had Key not demanded the death penalty, however, Walter McMillian would probably be wasting away in prison along with the scores of other convicted murderers who, precisely because they are not facing execution, generate neither public interest nor the attention of the country's top capital defenders, who employ an emergency-room triage system that focuses on those in greatest need.

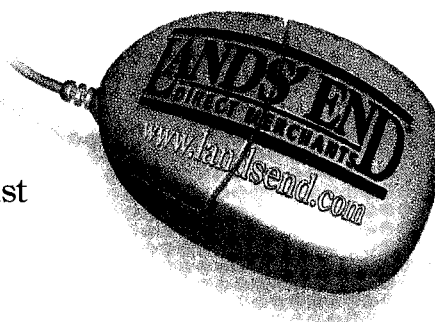
Just how often the police actually get the wrong man is nothing short of astounding. A 1996 Justice Department report, *Convicted by Juries, Exonerated by Science: Case Studies in the Use of DNA Evidence to Establish Innocence After Trial*, found that in 8,048 rape and rape-and-murder cases referred to the FBI crime lab from 1988 to mid-1995, a staggering 2,012 of the primary suspects were exonerated owing to DNA evidence alone. Had DNA analysis not been available (as it was not a decade earlier), several hundred of the 2,012 would probably have been tried, convicted, and sentenced for crimes they didn't commit.

DNA testing has without question revolutionized forensic



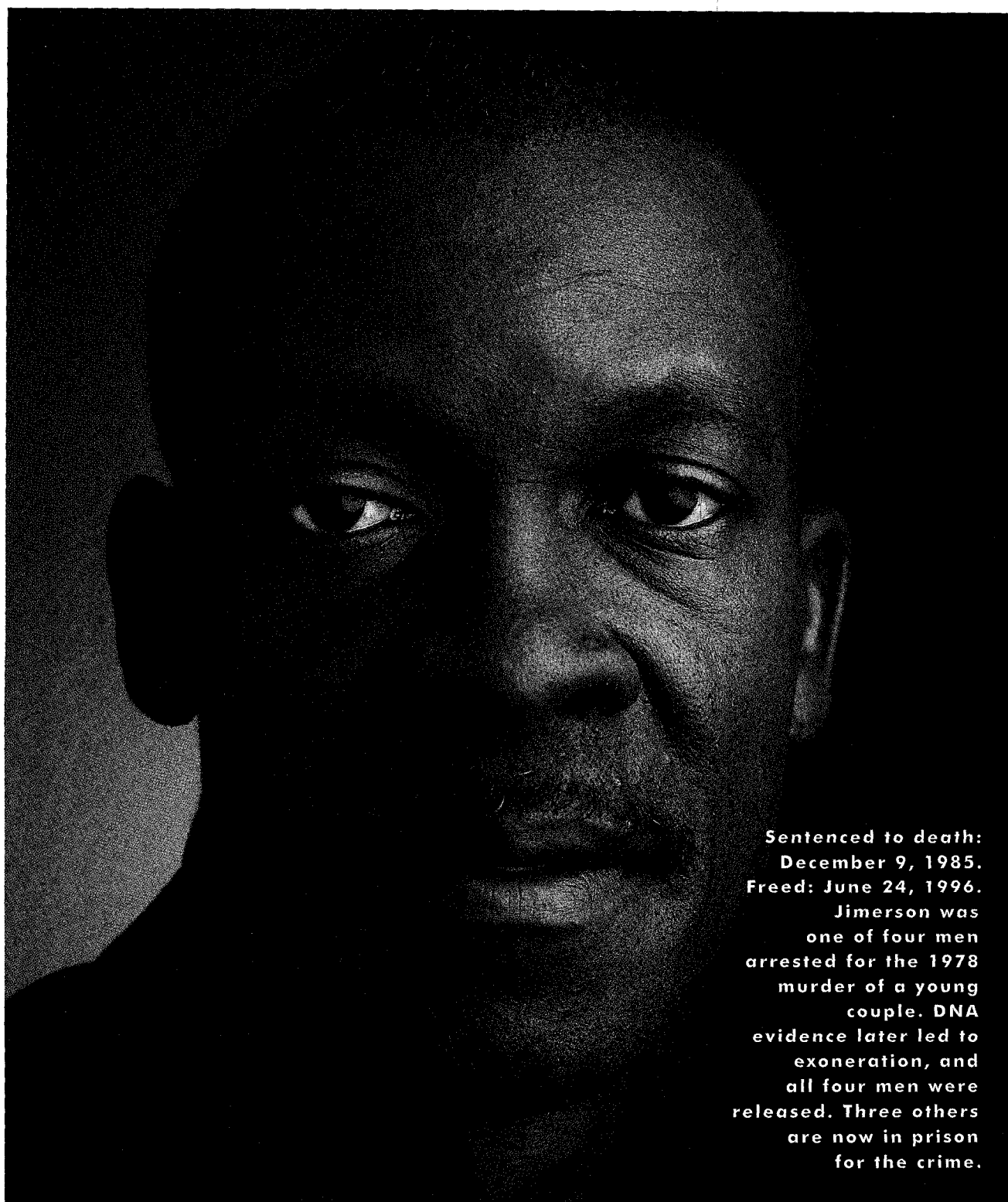
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**Sentenced to death:
December 9, 1985.
Freed: June 24, 1996.**
Jimerson was
one of four men
arrested for the 1978
murder of a young
couple. DNA
evidence later led to
exoneration, and
all four men were
released. Three others
are now in prison
for the crime.

science. Particularly in rape cases, its use is already preventing injustices of the kind that resulted from mistaken eyewitness identifications in the past. The attorney Barry C. Scheck says that his Innocence Project, at the Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law, at Yeshiva University, has successfully employed DNA evidence to exonerate thirty-six con-

VERNEAL JIMERSON



victed felons, and that nationwide DNA testing has been used to secure the release of sixty-two men sentenced for crimes they didn't commit, including eight on death row. Two death-penalty states, New York and Illinois, have found recent DNA-assisted cases so compelling that they have enacted laws allowing any inmate who feels he has a legitimate

claim of innocence to demand post-conviction DNA testing.

The bad news is that there is no logical reason to think that police-error rates in criminal investigations lacking DNA evidence are any better than the 25 percent error rate in those where it is present. In 1984 a Maryland jury concluded that Kirk Bloodsworth, a former Marine with no arrest record, was guilty of raping and murdering a nine-year-old girl, after hearing several eyewitnesses testify that they'd seen him with the girl on the day of the crime. In June of 1993, after Bloodsworth had spent nearly nine years in prison, a new DNA test, unavailable at the time of his trial, demonstrated that semen found on the victim's clothing could not have been his. Had the actual assailant in this case simply murdered the victim and not raped her, DNA testing would have been irrelevant, and Bloodsworth, whose sentence had been commuted to life, would probably still be rotting away in a Maryland prison.

"I was separated from my family and branded the worst thing a man can be called—a child killer and rapist," Bloodsworth says today. "I don't know why all these things happened to me. Maybe God had a reason. Maybe He was trying to say these things happen to ordinary people."

One can, of course, argue that Kirk Bloodsworth is that rare exception to the proper functioning of the judicial system. But one can make the same case for Walter McMillian, and Joseph Burrows, and Anthony Porter. At some point the accumulating aberrations begin to suggest a more pervasive problem. At some point they raise the troubling suspicion that we as a nation may be tolerating the execution of innocent people.

Death-Qualified Juries

ALTHOUGH there is a common perception that the average murderer has endless forums in which to make his case, the reality is that once a defendant is found guilty by a jury, doors to an appeal begin slamming shut, and the burden of proof becomes far greater: where the defendant once had to convince a jury that he was not guilty "beyond a reasonable doubt," he now goes before the court under a presumption of guilt and must attempt to prove his innocence. Therefore a defendant's first trial may be his only real opportunity to present a complete case. In gruesome, high-profile cases like the Nicarico murder, a defendant may go to trial with a theoretical presumption of innocence but he or she will have a difficult time proving that innocence. Jurors are naturally reluctant to acquit someone who may have murdered a child, and the more violent and vicious the crime, the more likely a jury is to convict. So-called death-qualification procedures, in which potential jurors are questioned, often for days on end, about their ability to impose the death penalty (they must be willing to call for the death penalty in order to be seated), tend to create an atmosphere in which jurors go into a courtroom assuming that the defendant is guilty and that their only job is to decide on the appropriate sentence. Numerous studies have demonstrated that death-qualified jurors are more likely to convict.

Mike Callahan, who sat on the death-qualified jury in the first Rolando Cruz trial (in which Cruz was tried with a co-defendant), believes that "half of the jurors had their minds made up before the trial even started." Callahan says that on the very first day of the trial, after the judge had ordered jurors not to discuss the proceedings among themselves, the jury foreman said, "Well, they're here, they must have done something." When the jurors finally began their deliberations, Callahan recalls, the first thing the foreman told them was "This'll be a mere formality, so we might as well get on with it." Callahan says he had grave reservations about the defendants' guilt and was stunned when the judge imposed the death sentence. "It wasn't an open-and-shut case, it absolutely wasn't, and to give the death penalty—I was absolutely appalled." Nevertheless, Callahan had voted to convict, because "I was more than willing to say, 'All right, we'll put you in the slammer for a while, and sooner or later the truth is going to come out.'" That's not exactly how the system is supposed to work.

Callahan and his fellow jurors might be forgiven their erroneous verdict, since they were not presented with all the evidence of innocence. If prosecutors present inaccurate, incomplete, or fabricated evidence, even the most unprejudiced and fair-minded juror may vote to convict an innocent man. And although most prosecutors and police officers presumably do not "cook" the facts, it is difficult to ignore the all-too-common exceptions. The Justice Department's DNA study found that eight of twenty-eight rape and rape-and-murder cases in which juries had convicted innocent men involved allegations of perjured trial testimony, fabricated lab evidence or expert testimony, or the withholding of exculpatory evidence by the police and prosecutors. Manufacturing evidence against an accused murderer may not be easy to get away with, but if the defendant has a criminal record, jurors are likely to give prosecutors the benefit of the doubt.

One troublesome and increasingly frequent source of perjured testimony is the "jailhouse snitch"—the convicted felon who will testify to just about anything for the prosecution in exchange for a reduced sentence. Walter F. Rowe, a professor of forensic science at George Washington University, says, "The dirty little secret in this country, and it's not such a secret, is that if you perjure yourself for the prosecution, no one's going to prosecute you." One Los Angeles County Jail inmate, Leslie White, acknowledged that he had fabricated a dozen "confessions" by fellow inmates, which he reported to authorities in exchange for more-lenient treatment.

But perjured evidence may come from sources far more insidious than convicted felons. In West Virginia, Frederick Zain, a police chemist and a popular expert witness for the prosecution, was accused of repeatedly falsifying laboratory results and presenting perjured testimony at trial. No fewer than 170 rape and murder convictions in West Virginia and Texas, all based in part on testimony by Zain, were called into question, and six men who served a total of forty years in prison have had their convictions overturned. In Texas, the

nation's execution capital, where more than seventy-nine people have been executed in the past three years, prosecutors relied for years on the expert testimony of Ralph Erdmann, a forensic pathologist, who repeatedly falsified autopsy reports to support prosecution arguments in death-penalty cases. A special prosecutor's investigation of Erdmann concluded, "If the prosecution theory was that death was caused by a Martian death ray, then that was what Dr. Erdmann reported." Texas prosecutors also repeatedly relied on James Grigson, a psychiatrist who became known as "Dr. Death" because his expert opinion in 124 capital cases contributed to 115 death sentences. One of those sentenced was Randall Dale Adams, whose wrongful conviction was the subject of the movie *The Thin Blue Line*. Grigson testified at Adams's 1977 trial that the defendant had a "sociopathic personality disorder" and that "there is no question in my mind that Adams is guilty." Asked if Adams was likely to kill in the future, given the opportunity, Grigson replied, "He will kill again." In fact Adams was innocent, and had never killed anyone. He came within seventy-two hours of execution.

Winning at Any Cost

IN Canada, which has no death penalty and only a handful of known wrongful murder convictions, the Ontario government conducted a year-long investigation into a case strikingly similar to that of Rolando Cruz. Guy Paul Morin was convicted of raping and murdering a nine-year-old girl and was freed in 1995 after a DNA test helped to establish his innocence. His family was awarded \$1.25 million and an official apology from the attorney general's office. When Fred Kaufman, a retired judge, released a 1,400-page report on the case, in April of last year, he said, "This case is not unique. This case is not an aberration. The causes of Mr. Morin's conviction are rooted in systemic problems as well as the failings of individuals." The report made 119 recommendations for reforming the Canadian criminal-justice system.

In contrast, law-enforcement officials in the United States are just beginning to wake up to the fact that the growing numbers of innocent prisoners who are being discovered on death row raise profound constitutional issues. Although the Justice Department and a handful of state legislatures have examined pieces of the wrongful-conviction puzzle, no government agency, federal or state, has conducted a comprehensive analysis of why such miscarriages occur—not even in Florida, where at least eighteen innocent men have been discovered on death row since 1977.

In 1935 Supreme Court Justice George Sutherland wrote that a prosecutor is

the servant of the law, the twofold aim of which is that guilt shall not escape or innocence suffer. . . . It is as much his duty to refrain from improper methods calculated to produce a wrongful conviction as it is to use every legitimate means to bring about a just one.

Since 1977 more than 570 people have been executed in the United States. Executions have become so routine that they are rarely given anything but perfunctory notice by the media. Rational debate over the benefits versus the costs of all these executions has been replaced by the rhetoric of "the paladins and pillars of justice and equity," as William Faulkner described them in *Old Man*—men who have become "blind apostles not of mere justice but of all human decency, blind instruments not of equity but of all human outrage and vengeance." In many prosecutorial offices Sutherland's conception of American justice has been replaced by an ethos of winning at any cost.

Examples of the take-no-prisoners approach to justice are legion. In 1995 Newt Gingrich, then the speaker of the House, suggested that Communist Chinese-style executions of "twenty-seven or thirty or thirty-five people at one time" might deter would-be drug smugglers. When flames burst from the head of Pedro Medina during his execution, in March of 1997, Florida's highest law-enforcement official, State Attorney General Bob Butterworth, saw a silver lining. He commented that the incident would send a message to potential lawbreakers: "People who wish to commit murder, they better not do it in the state of Florida, because we may have a problem with our electric chair." Television advertising in recent election campaigns has often featured candidates trying to persuade voters that they're "tougher" with respect to the death penalty than their opponents. Kirk Fordice promised in his campaign for governor that he would make Mississippi the "capital of capital punishment." Texas Governor Ann Richards, who presided over fifty executions during her four years in office, lost to George W. Bush in 1994 after a campaign in which he attacked her for not executing more people more quickly. During his first term Bush presided over seventy-seven executions. To date no fewer than 100 people have been executed on Bush's watch. Elected governors have also taken to boasting about the number of death warrants they have signed, as if this provided some objective yardstick of their fitness to serve. Kentucky Governor Paul Patton signed five execution warrants on his second day in office, though all five cases were still pending in court. Bob Martinez has bragged that he signed some ninety death warrants during his four years as governor of Florida. And Governor Bill Clinton flew to Arkansas during the 1992 New Hampshire presidential primary for the execution of a brain-damaged man who had killed a policeman. Flouting Supreme Court rulings against executing the mentally incompetent, Clinton seized control of the crime issue for the Democratic Party.

Many of these same death-penalty champions dismiss concerns about mistaken convictions and the execution of innocents, assuring voters that gubernatorial clemency provides what Chief Justice William Rehnquist referred to in 1993 as "the fail-safe in our criminal justice system." In several prominent cases where innocent men had exhausted all avenues of redress, clemency proved their only salvation. In Maryland, for example, the wrongfully condemned Kirk Bloodsworth might still be in jail had the pardon power not been available.



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Clemency, however, presupposes a degree of integrity and political courage that is not readily apparent among the governors of most death-penalty states. Governors often eschew clemency, citing the sanctity of the jury process and their obligation to carry out the will of the people or to uphold the laws of the state. In cases where evidence of innocence is anything short of overwhelming, a governor facing a tough reelection in a strong pro-death-penalty state might decide against clemency for largely political reasons. The "fail-safe" case that Rehnquist wrote about involved a man convicted of killing two police officers in Texas. No governor would be inclined to grant clemency in that kind of situation.

Since 1973 there have been more than 6,000 death sentences and only forty cases of clemency nationwide. Clemency is most often granted when a governor is leaving office and needn't worry about voter reaction. In Texas, where it's difficult to keep up with reported miscarriages of justice, the Board of Pardons and Paroles almost never consents to defense requests for clemency. The only recent defense request granted was in 1998, when Governor Bush stopped the execution of Henry Lucas, who, although he was an established serial killer, had falsely confessed to dozens of other murders, including the one for which he was about to be executed. Bush wisely decided that it would be unseemly to execute him for a crime he didn't commit.

Unfortunate though political motives may be in the gubernatorial court of last resort, they are far more perfidious in the courthouse. Yet the idea of an independent judiciary—of judges willing to stand above politics—has come under relentless assault. Senate Republicans made it clear at the outset of the Clinton presidency that they would challenge any judicial

There is a perception that the average murderer has endless forums in which to make his case. The reality is that once a defendant is found guilty, the burden of proof becomes far greater.

nominee who lacked strong capital-punishment credentials, although the precise standard of political correctness has sometimes been difficult to discern. When Rosemary Barkett, the chief justice of Florida's Supreme Court, was nominated to the U.S. Court of Appeals, Senator Orrin Hatch said he wanted to see if she was "serious enough about the death penalty," even though Barkett had upheld more than 200 death sentences.

In 1996 Supreme Court Justice John Paul Stevens told the American Bar Association that "a campaign promise to be 'tough on crime,' or to 'enforce the death penalty,' is evidence of bias that should disqualify a candidate from sitting in criminal cases." Such a view probably seems tiresomely old-fashioned to a great many lawmakers today. Nowadays politicians

are too busy seeking recalls, resignations, and impeachments of judges whose opinions are politically unpopular to be concerned with judicial independence or the separation of powers. In Tennessee, Republican Governor Don Sundquist proclaimed before a 1996 judicial election that he would appoint only death-penalty supporters to be criminal-court judges. Some judges and judicial candidates who must run for office have clearly imbibed a similar message, campaigning for office with promises to impose the death sentence at every opportunity. In thirty-two of the thirty-eight death-penalty states judges may be subjected to voter approval. In most it is highly implausible that a candidate who refused to take a strong position in favor of the death penalty could be elected. Judges are also elected in eight out of the nine states where it is a judicial prerogative to impose a death sentence or to override a jury's sentence of life. Can such judges fairly examine the facts in a gruesome murder case when the public is demanding execution?

"How Much Justice Can You Afford?"

NO doubt most judges, police officers, and prosecutors are committed to the principle that a defendant is innocent until proven guilty. The single greatest threat to an innocent defendant, however, may be his or her own attorney. In Illinois, Gary Gauger was sentenced to die in 1994 for murdering his parents, after his well-paid attorneys failed to conduct a serious investigation into the prosecution's paper-thin case. Eventually Gauger was released and members of a Wisconsin motorcycle gang were indicted for the crime.

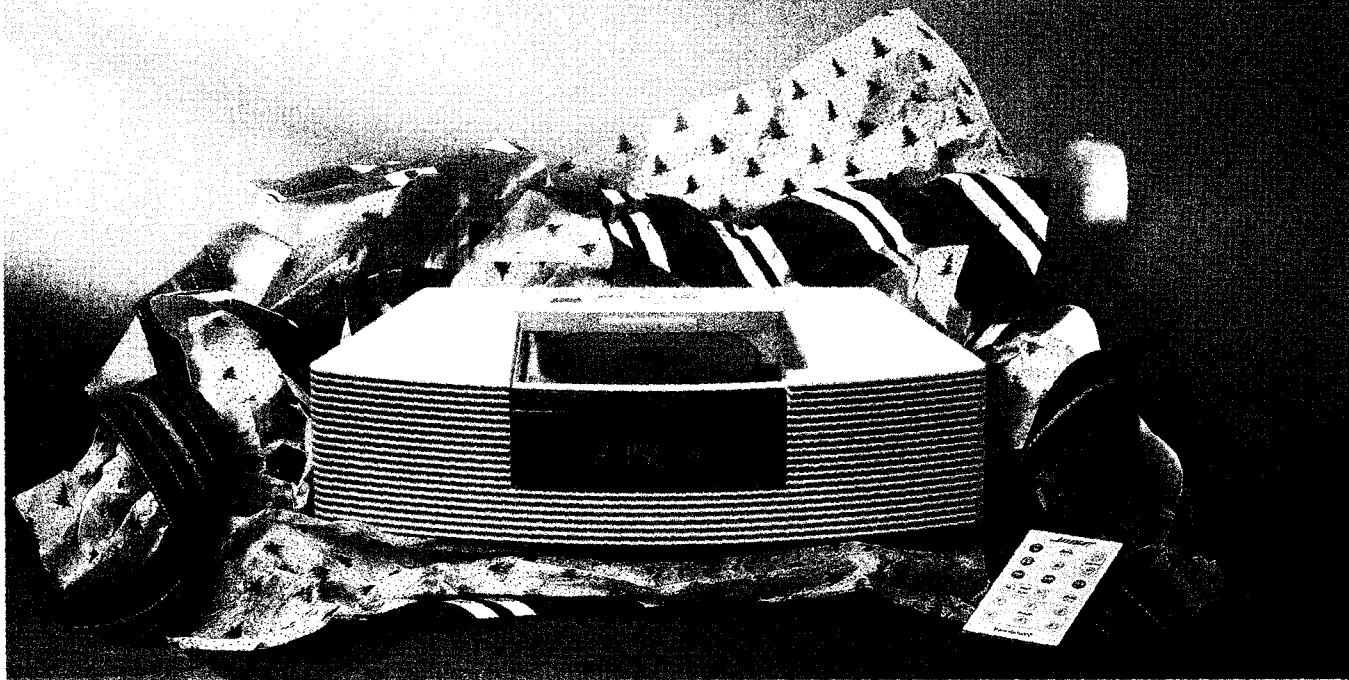
Perhaps Gauger was just unlucky. After all, anyone can hire a bad lawyer. The average capital defendant doesn't have the money to hire O. J. Simpson's "dream team." More likely than not, he has no money at all. At the very least, three fourths of state-prison inmates and half of federal-prison inmates have taxpayer-financed court-appointed counsel. The quality of this representation is questionable.

In its historic 1963 decision in *Gideon v. Wainwright* the Supreme Court stated, "In our adversary system of criminal justice, any person haled into court, who is too poor to hire a lawyer, cannot be assured a fair trial unless counsel is provided to him." Since then the Court has ruled that in all criminal proceedings that carry prison sentences adequate counsel also means access to expert witnesses and investigative services. But how those rights are implemented has been left entirely to the states, and often such rights in fact belong only to those who can afford them.

Eighteen death-penalty states lack statewide public-defender organizations, and many of those that have them underfund them so seriously that lawyers end up handling huge caseloads that would be considered unconscionable, to say nothing of impractical, in the private sector. Most public defenders are so

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poorly paid that many talented lawyers tend to shy away from this sort of practice. Some jurisdictions award capital cases to the attorney making the lowest bid. In one Georgia county the low-bid public-contract attorney tried fourteen cases, entered a grand total of seven motions, and entered 262 guilty pleas for his court-assigned clients from 1993 to 1998. Other states randomly assign lawyers from a general list, a system that almost ensures that lawyers lacking appropriate qualifications will frequently be found. Aden Harrison Jr., a black man indicted for murder in Georgia, was assigned an eighty-three-year-old attorney who had been an imperial wizard of the Ku Klux Klan. Dennis Williams, one of the four men exonerated in 1996 with the help of Northwestern University students, was defended on a murder charge in Illinois by a lawyer who was simultaneously defending himself in disbarment proceedings. Federico Martinez-Macias was represented in Texas by a court-appointed attorney who failed to present witnesses, including an alibi witness who could have disputed the prosecutor's case. Martinez-Macias spent nine years on death row and came within two days of execution before a pro bono attorney in Washington, D.C., having thoroughly investigated his case, managed to demolish the state's evidence. In ruling that Martinez-Macias had been denied his constitutional right to counsel, the court noted that the defendant's trial attorney had been paid \$11.84 an hour by the state and that "unfortunately, the justice system got only what it paid for."

In March of last year, on the thirty-fifth anniversary of the *Gideon* decision, Attorney General Janet Reno wrote in *USA Today*, "No prosecutor wants to prosecute someone whose defense counsel lacks the necessary skills and experience to put up a defense, and face the likelihood of having the conviction reversed on appeal." In the real world, however, one doesn't hear the National Association of Attorneys General making the case for better-funded defense lawyers, or complaining that indigents have been defended by law students, clerks, and lawyers with no courtroom or capital-defense experience. In Texas, where a state bar committee has estimated that defending a post-conviction capital client requires 400 to 900 hours of work, the Court of Criminal Appeals limits state-funded attorney compensation to 150 hours. When judges routinely reject defense requests for investigators or expert witnesses, prosecutors don't jump to their feet to object that this will make the proceeding unfair, even though they face no similar constraints on resources. Nor does one hear prosecutors carping about the lack of a level playing field in Mississippi, where attorneys are paid no more than \$1,000, plus a small allowance for overhead, to try a capital case. (A private attorney defending a capital case would typically earn \$100 to \$500 an hour.) If these lawyers actually put in the hours needed to defend complex death-penalty cases, they would earn less than the minimum wage. Many don't put in the necessary time, and their clients pay the price.

Asked if they would favor a judicial system in which only the prosecution could present its case, most Americans would presumably be aghast. But in many courtrooms such *ex parte*

proceedings are, for all intents and purposes, what happens. The adversary system simply doesn't exist. *Convicted by Juries, Exonerated by Science* found that a major cause of wrongful convictions was incompetent attorneys who neglected to examine the prosecution's forensic evidence or failed to have it tested. Nancy Gist, the director of the Bureau of Justice Assistance, which dispenses \$1.7 billion a year to state and local criminal-justice systems, has described the quality of counsel in capital cases as "mostly abysmal." One innocent man spent eleven years on Georgia's death row because his lawyer failed to have a vital piece of evidence analyzed by a laboratory. In Kentucky an investigation by the Department of Public Advocacy found that 25 percent of death-row inmates had been represented at trial by attorneys who had since been disbarred or had resigned to avoid disbarment. A 1990 study found that 13 percent of the defendants executed in Louisiana had been represented by lawyers who had been disciplined, a rate sixty-eight times as great as that for the state bar as a whole. The pervasive inadequacy of defense counsel in capital cases was a major reason that the American Bar Association's House of Delegates overwhelmingly approved a 1997 resolution calling for a moratorium on executions. "In case after case," a report accompanying the resolution stated, "decisions about who will die and who will live turn not on the nature of the offense the defendant is charged with committing, but rather on the nature of the legal representation the defendant receives."

Death-penalty advocates are right to insist that the public should not be required to provide every capital defendant with a team of \$400-an-hour lawyers. Nevertheless, no one seriously doubts that a defendant's prospects—whether he is guilty or innocent—will be improved by a skilled attorney. A study commissioned by the Texas Judicial Council in the mid-1980s showed that a defendant's chances of being convicted in a capital case were 28 percent higher if he was represented by court-appointed counsel than if he retained counsel. The study also showed that 55 percent of those who retained counsel but 79 percent of those with appointed counsel were sentenced to death. Walter Rowe, of George Washington University, says that for a defendant in state court the "unfortunate fact of life is, if you ain't got bucks, you're going to take it in the shorts." Rowe says he asks defendants who solicit his services as an expert witness, "How much justice can you afford?" "Numerous innocent people are presently incarcerated because of the inadequacy of their attorneys," he says.

"One Half Justice"

ALMOST thirty-seven years after *Gideon v. Wainwright* it is difficult to escape the unpleasant conclusion that the failure of state and local jurisdictions to provide adequate legal representation in criminal cases is anything other than a deliberate policy—one that probably arises from a pervasive belief that most criminal defendants are guilty

and therefore unworthy of competent counsel. This inattention—by now a matter of tacit national policy—to what should be a fundamental constitutional right is bolstered by a self-justifying logic that becomes almost irresistible when one considers the tangible “benefits.” By failing to fund counsel for indigents adequately a state or locality not only saves an enormous amount of money but also makes meaningful defenses difficult if not impossible, thus easing the government’s burden in winning convictions and imposing death sentences, and diminishing the likelihood that heinous errors will ever be discovered. In providing counsel to the poor “we set our sights on the embarrassing target of mediocrity” and “halfway justice,” Harold Clarke, the chief justice of Georgia, said in 1993. “To

Many of the prisoners freed from death row over the past two decades are alive today only because their executions were stayed long enough for the truth about their cases to emerge.

my way of thinking, one half justice must mean one half injustice, and one half injustice is no justice at all.”

Public officials see themselves, of course, not as skimping on justice or constitutional rights but as conscientious guardians of the budget who are tough on crime and determined to provide law-enforcement authorities with the very best tools possible to get criminals off the streets. Death-penalty advocates avoid questions about the condemning of innocent people by focusing on the number of murderers never prosecuted or mistakenly freed and by asking “How many innocent people will die if we do not execute vicious murderers?” Most prosecutors I have interviewed seemed to accept as an article of faith that adequate legal resources are provided to capital defendants, even when those prosecutors hadn’t a clue what the actual resources were in their respective states.

If a hospital assigned a cosmetic surgeon to perform a heart-bypass operation, the hospital would be held accountable when the patient died. But when states make a practice of appointing cosmetic attorneys to defend indigents, they declare that justice has been served, regardless of the outcome. Astonishingly, the Supreme Court has endorsed that position, ruling that jurisdictions appointing incompetent attorneys bear virtually no responsibility for the miscarriages that occur. “The government is not responsible for, and hence not able to prevent, attorney errors,” the Supreme Court ruled in 1984 in *Strickland v. Washington*. Who, then, is responsible? According to the Supreme Court, apparently, the defendant is responsible. Under its landmark ruling state courts have typically found no violation of the Sixth Amendment, which guarantees the assistance of counsel in all criminal prosecutions, even when lawyers have been addicted to heroin or cocaine during a trial, have come to

court drunk, have conducted no investigation of their clients’ claims, or have been unable to cite a single relevant capital case. In one death-penalty case a lawyer presented no evidence during the penalty phase of a trial and made the following closing argument (quoted in its entirety): “You are an extremely intelligent jury. You’ve got that man’s life in your hands. You can take it or not. That’s all I have to say.” The defendant was executed. In a Texas case in which the defense lawyer slept through most of his client’s trial, the judge found no denial of due process. “The right to be heard,” the Supreme Court ruled in 1932, in the famous *Scottsboro Boys* case, “would be, in many cases, of little avail if it did not comprehend the right to be heard by counsel.” But the Texas court didn’t think it essential that defense counsel hear the case, or even be conscious: “The Constitution doesn’t say the lawyer has to be awake,” the judge ruled.

How does the highest court in the land justify what to a layman appears to be a brazen denial of due process? By referring the hapless defendant to the healing succor of his national or local bar association. “The Sixth Amendment refers simply to ‘counsel,’ not specifying particular requirements of effective assistance,” the *Strickland* court ruled. “It relies instead on the legal profession’s maintenance of standards sufficient to justify the law’s presumption that counsel will fulfill the role in the adversary process that the Amendment envisions.”

It’s an extraordinary presumption. The legal profession has, after all, produced reams of ethical and professional standards to guide lawyers, but they are widely ignored and largely unenforced or unenforceable, and the justices of the Supreme Court know this better than anyone. In 1989 the American Bar Association approved “Guidelines for the Appointment and Performance of Counsel in Death Penalty Cases,” which set rigorous standards. Invaluable though these guidelines may be in establishing goals for state and local governments, they remain purely hortatory and are rarely put into practice. The ABA’s “Rules of Professional Conduct” require attorneys to communicate adequately and promptly with their clients, and forbid conflicts of interest. The ABA’s “Model Rules” include a pie-in-the-sky provision that stipulates, “Every lawyer, regardless of professional prominence or professional workload, has a responsibility to provide legal services to those unable to pay.” Yet in a country with a million lawyers more than 200 condemned prisoners await execution without counsel, and thousands of indigents accused of crimes are processed through the courts each year with only the barest semblance of counsel. Naturally, the ABA also has standards regarding ability (“A lawyer shall not handle a legal matter which he knows or should know that he is not competent to handle”), but lawyers routinely handle matters they know little or nothing about with the full complicity of the courts—often with grave consequences to their clients and not a whimper from the state or local bar. The world would truly be a better place if all good people heeded the wisdom of the

bar's sage oracles, but they don't. Justice Thurgood Marshall knew they wouldn't when he wrote in his dissent to *Strickland*, "To tell lawyers and the lower courts that counsel for a criminal defendant must behave . . . like 'a reasonably competent attorney,' is to tell them almost nothing."

The predicament of an innocent defendant represented by an incompetent lawyer has been further complicated by Supreme Court rulings on what is known as "procedural default," which effectively punishes the client for his lawyer's incompetence or stupidity. In practice, procedural default sets up a classic Catch-22 situation. An indigent defendant is assigned a lawyer who fails to investigate the case properly, puts on a perfunctory defense, ignores exculpatory evidence, and collects his fee, while his client goes to prison. When the defendant, now a convicted felon, tries to have the exculpatory evidence raised on appeal, it is barred by the court, which announces that it should have been presented by counsel at the initial trial. Meanwhile, any claim against the lawyer is conveniently excused, thanks to *Strickland*.

In one of its most controversial procedural-default rulings the Supreme Court allowed Roger Coleman to be executed in Virginia after finding that he had no right to present in court what he claimed was evidence of innocence, because his attorney had missed a filing deadline by three days. In a ruling that seemed to give process precedence over life and liberty, the Court concluded that Coleman "must bear the risk of attorney error that results in a procedural default." Justice O'Connor wrote one of the more astounding death-penalty decisions in recent memory: "This is a case about federalism. It concerns the respect that federal courts owe the States and the States' procedural rules when reviewing the claims of state prisoners in federal habeas corpus" claims—habeas being the procedure that allows prisoners to petition state and federal courts to determine whether a sentence violates the laws or the Constitution of the United States. A 6–3 majority of the Court appeared to be saying that state procedures were more important than Coleman's claim of innocence, and the defendant was executed. Justice Blackmun called the execution "an affront to principles of fundamental fairness," adding, "The more the Court constrains the federal courts' power to reach the constitutional claims of those sentenced to death, the more the Court undermines the very legitimacy of capital punishment itself."

Not only has the Supreme Court given its seal of approval to incompetent counsel; in some capital cases it has even sanctioned a lack of any counsel whatsoever. Coleman's execution was justified by the Court in part on the basis of another precedent-setting Virginia case, *Murray v. Giarratano*, in which the Court ruled that a capital defendant is not entitled to a court-appointed lawyer in a post-conviction proceeding. Citing *Giarratano*, the Court ruled that because Coleman had no right to counsel, he had no basis on which to make a claim of ineffective counsel. But why would the Supreme Court under any circumstances conclude that a person facing the ultimate sanction did not need an attorney—particularly since federal law

does recognize a right to counsel in post-conviction proceedings? Because, the Court reasoned, a state "may quite sensibly decide to concentrate the resources it devotes to providing attorneys for capital defendants at the trial and appellate stages of a capital proceeding." This sounds reasonable enough. But the Court's abstract rationale bears no relation to reality. Had the justices bothered to examine what resources Virginia was actually devoting to trials and appeals, they would have found that the state has one of the worst records on indigent defense anywhere in the nation, and routinely ignores the needs of the poor at both the trial and appellate stages.

Then again, perhaps the justices believe that a post-conviction appeal, one of the most complex areas of death-penalty law, is best handled by an illiterate high school dropout facing a lethal injection or the electric chair. If so, they might want to examine the abysmal success rate of capital defendants who try to play lawyer. Stephen Bright, the director of the Southern Center for Human Rights and one of the nation's pre-eminent capital-defense attorneys, says the chance that a person of normal intelligence could successfully represent himself without counsel on a murder charge is "equivalent to our going to the airport, and the pilot isn't there, and we say, 'Well, we'll just fly the Concorde to Paris ourselves.'" Bright recalls the 1996 case of Exzavious Gibson, a man with an IQ below 85, who was condemned to die by the State of Georgia and was forced to represent himself in a state post-conviction proceeding. "It was a farce, of course. The state had an expert lawyer and the defendant had no idea what he was doing."

Speeding Up Executions

MANY of the more than eighty prisoners who have been freed from death row over the past two decades are alive today only because their executions were stayed long enough for the truth about their cases to emerge. Some had to wait fifteen or twenty years. Nevertheless, the drumbeat for speedier executions continues. The Supreme Court, Congress, and many states have moved during the past decade to expedite executions by making it more difficult for defendants to have their appeals heard. States have, for example, placed stringent time limits on appeals. In Virginia a person convicted of murder is given twenty-one days after conviction to present new evidence of innocence. Suffice it to say that new evidence rarely, if ever, materializes in a capital case during the first three weeks following conviction.

In 1995 Congress weighed in on the need for speedier executions when it eliminated the \$20 million annual budget for Post-Conviction Defender Organizations, which had provided some of the most sophisticated and effective counsel for death-row inmates in twenty death-penalty states. The following year Congress passed the Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act, slapping a one-year statute of limitations on the filing of habeas corpus petitions in capital cases. Until then Americans had lived quite comfortably with the notion

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that there should be no time limit on habeas appeals—that the right to be free from illegal restraint never expired.

The radical revision of habeas law was sold to the House of Representatives by Henry Hyde, the chairman of the Judiciary Committee, as the “Holy Grail” of criminal-justice reform, a long-sought change that would address what he called “the absurdity, the obscenity” of “endless appeals” in death-penalty cases. The average time between sentencing and execution is a little over eight years. “Eight years is ridiculous, fifteen and seventeen years even more so,” Hyde proclaimed during House debate on the act, insisting that such delays “make a mockery of the law.” Orrin Hatch, the chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, declared that “support for an end to frivolous death-penalty appeals is the most authentic evidence of an elected official’s support for the death penalty.” Hyde and Hatch directed their spleen at the pariahs on death row, but 99 percent of habeas petitions relate to noncapital cases. Still, this fundamental right has now been circumscribed for everyone. As for the one percent of habeas petitions filed by death-row inmates, neither state nor federal courts have found them entirely “frivolous.” On the contrary: in nearly two thirds of the cases courts have found violations so serious as to warrant overturning the convictions.

Will the new one-year statute of limitations increase the likelihood that innocent people are executed? Congressman Bill McCollum, of Florida, a leading advocate of capital punishment and one of the authors of the anti-terrorism bill, thinks not. “It simply speeds up the process of execution where someone’s truly guilty,” McCollum says, adding that there is no time limit on filing a claim of innocence. He would like to see the time between sentencing and execution reduced from the current national average of eight years to four to six years. But in the past, evidence of innocence has taken seven, twelve, fifteen, or more years to surface. McCollum insists that speeding up the process will actually benefit death-row inmates, because the expert resources brought to bear just before an execution will now come into play in the fourth year rather than the fourteenth. That may be wishful thinking. And it clearly doesn’t apply to the cases whose outcomes have nothing to do with the typical legal actions brought on behalf of the condemned—the cases that turn on pure serendipity, that need time for the real murderer to step forward and confess, or time for police officers or witnesses who perjured themselves to feel safe in talking. Time may heal all wounds, but it won’t do much for a lethal injection.

Robert E. Morin, who got Kirk Bloodsworth released from prison, told a conference at American University in 1995 that speeding up executions will result in the execution of innocent people. “It’s not a question of increasing the probability; it’s going to happen,” Morin says. “It’s just a matter of when, and when we discover their innocence.” Morin, now a superior-court judge in the District of Columbia, said that “anybody who wants to compress the time” should “sit down and have a conversation with Mr. Bloodsworth and his family about why you wanted to shorten the period of time he had to work on his case.”

For its part, the Supreme Court has sought in recent years to give maximum discretion to state-court constitutional determinations. It has, for example, expanded the so-called harmless-error doctrine, making it easier for states to uphold convictions regardless of whether errors or prosecutorial misconduct contributed to an unfair trial. And under Chief Justice William Rehnquist it has seized on every available opportunity to limit federal-court review of state habeas rulings. A provision of the new anti-terrorism law limiting federal habeas review to cases in which a state-court decision “involved an unreasonable application of clearly established federal law” has already been narrowly interpreted by several of the most conservative circuit courts. And if the Supreme Court follows their lead, says John Blume, a habeas expert and the director of the Cornell Death Penalty Project, “it would be impossible for a person to get federal habeas relief.”

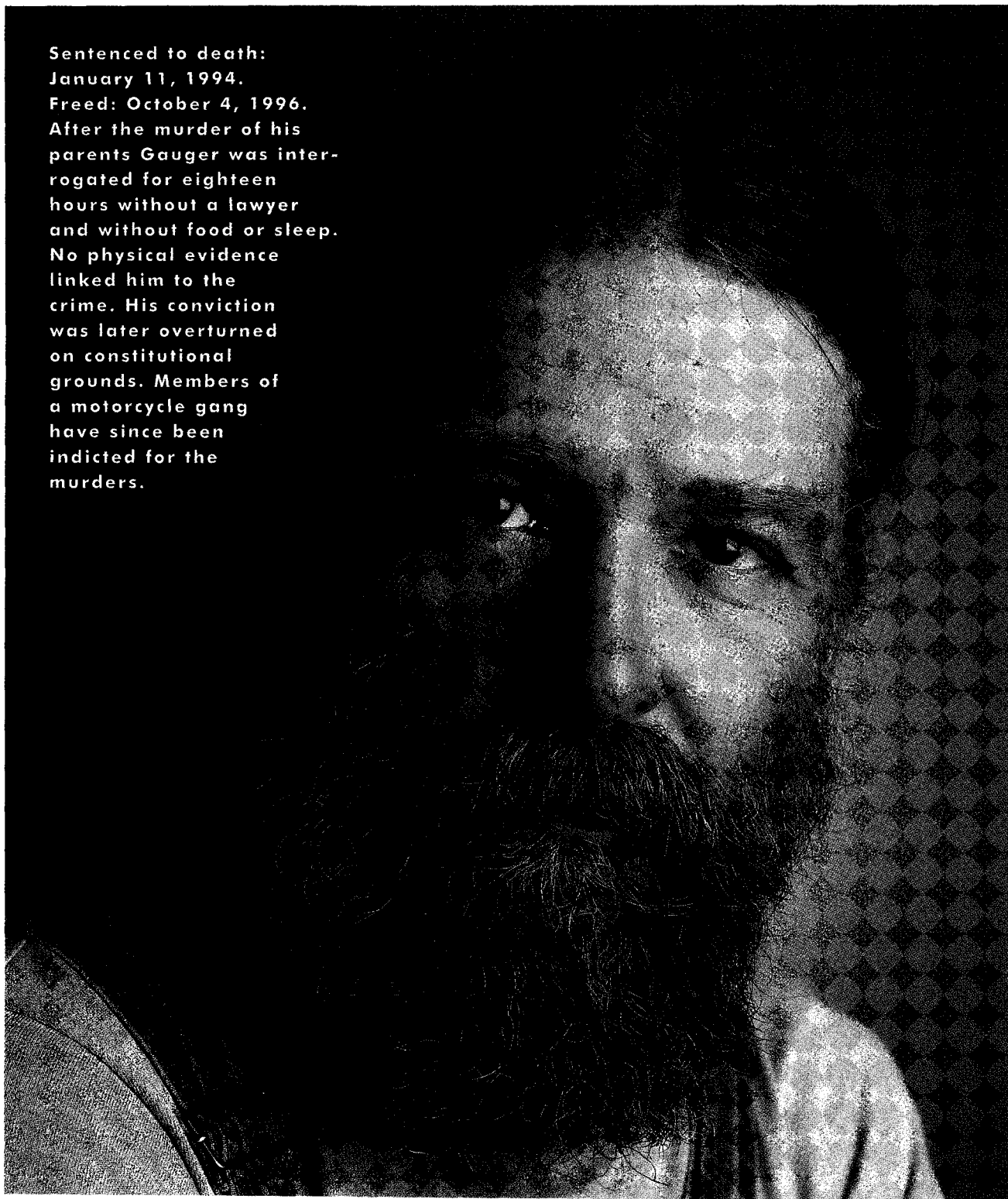
Where the Court is headed on claims of innocence is not at all clear. In January of 1993, in *Herrera v. Collins*, Rehnquist bemoaned “the very disruptive effect that entertaining claims of actual innocence would have on the need for finality in death penalty cases” and dismissed the argument that “claims of actual innocence based on newly discovered evidence” provide a rationale for habeas relief. At the same time, the court’s majority ruled that it would be unconstitutional to execute a defendant with “a truly persuasive demonstration of actual innocence made after trial.” What a “truly persuasive” case would be, however, remains unclear, because the court has yet to identify one. Leonel Herrera’s case was evidently not what the justices had in mind. He was executed three and a half months after the Supreme Court issued its ruling. His final words were “I am innocent, innocent, innocent. . . . Something very wrong is taking place tonight.”

The Public-Opinion Factor

As executions become increasingly common, the media seem to find them less and less newsworthy, and the public grows decidedly more blasé about them. (The five-hundredth execution since capital punishment was reinstated, in 1976, received a 141-word notice in the *New York Times* “National News Briefs” column.) Dozens of stories about innocent people wrongly condemned to death have provided entertaining fodder for TV newsmagazines, yet they’ve provoked little public outcry and few demands for compensation of victims or calls for action against police officers, prosecutors, and judges who perpetrate these miscarriages. Only a handful of states have addressed the need for preventive measures, such as better-funded defense services.

Unquestionably, support for the death penalty remains high—the proportion in favor of it has ranged from 70 to 76 percent over the period 1982–1996, as against 38 percent in 1965 and 47 percent in 1970. It is these numbers that drive the debate on capital punishment. Nevertheless, when questioners suggest that the death penalty “has a built-in racism” or that

Sentenced to death:
January 11, 1994.
Freed: October 4, 1996.
After the murder of his
parents Gauger was inter-
rogated for eighteen
hours without a lawyer
and without food or sleep.
No physical evidence
linked him to the
crime. His conviction
was later overturned
on constitutional
grounds. Members of
a motorcycle gang
have since been
indicted for the
murders.



“many people have been sentenced to death who have later been found innocent,” support for capital punishment declines abruptly. In one survey 48 percent of respondents had “some doubts” or “serious doubts” when the race factor was introduced, and 58 percent expressed doubts when the possibility of innocence was introduced. Even in the states most strongly

GARY GAUGER



in favor of the death penalty support drops dramatically—to anywhere from 50 to 61 percent, depending on the poll—when the alternative of life imprisonment with absolutely no possibility of parole is mentioned to respondents.

Studies of capital juries buttress the idea that Americans are far less gung-ho about the death penalty than the polls sug-

gest. Because capital juries are "death-qualified," one might expect the typical jury to be much more inclined to impose death than the public at large, of which approximately 25 percent opposes the death penalty under any circumstances. But a 1993 Justice Department study indicated that where death was an option, juries imposed it in only one out of eight cases. One reason for this is that almost all death-penalty states now offer life without parole as an option for jurors. Studies also show that in some cases jurors have been concerned about executing an innocent person; they have "lingering doubts" about the defendant's guilt, and although those doubts may not be strong enough to warrant letting the defendant go free, they forestall a vote for death.

Finally, unlike normal citizens responding to the latest sensational murder case on television, jurors are required to consider mitigating evidence in sentencing. Although the idea of a murderer is an abstraction to most of us, jurors must confront flesh-and-blood human beings. And the evidence suggests that when they get to know a defendant, when they learn the details of an individual case, many jurors find it difficult to take a person's life.

Building In Safeguards

ENGLAND'S experience might lead one to expect that public support for the death penalty would decline dramatically if it could be proved that an innocent person had been executed. Yet some death-penalty advocates believe, like Congressman Bill McCollum, that what they see as the remote possibility of executing an innocent person is no reason to abolish capital punishment. Others have argued that the occasional accidental execution of an innocent person is the price the country must pay to combat violent crime. William Kunkle, the Chicago prosecutor who both secured the death penalty for the serial killer John Wayne Gacy and brought the unsuccessful case against police officers and prosecutors for allegedly framing Rolando Cruz, argues that the execution of innocent people is inevitable. "Sooner or later it's going to happen," he says. "It comes with the territory. It is not humanly possible to design a system that is perfect. And if people are not prepared for the eventuality that human institutions are going to make mistakes, then they shouldn't support the death penalty, and they shouldn't elect legislators who support it."

Although it is undoubtedly impossible to design a perfect system, that hardly argues for tolerating the status quo. Nevertheless, the idea that this system is the best that human beings can design remains an article of faith among many prosecutors, death-penalty supporters, and citizens in general. William Otis, the former aide to President Bush, argues, "It goes back to first principles. It depends on what a person really believes about the nature, honesty, and legitimacy of government in this country. And a person who basically has faith in those things is more likely to believe that the death penalty is a permissible remedy than the person who doesn't."

But the first principles with which many of us grew up were designed to protect innocent and powerless individuals from an abusive and overweening government, whether federal or state. From that perspective there can be no greater offense by a state, and nothing more damaging to its legitimacy, than the execution of an innocent person. The fact that we are not able to guarantee that no innocent person will be executed remains the most powerful argument against the death penalty. If the government and we citizens want to continue executing men and women, we might at least take some steps to reduce the risk that the ultimate sanction will be imposed on innocent people. That won't be easy. In an environment in which defendants are typically presumed to be guilty, any legislator who tries to provide safeguards for the accused is certain to be attacked as "soft on crime." The problem is one not only of reclaiming some fundamental notions of fairness but also of building in new safeguards at virtually every stage of the criminal-justice process.

First, reforming the system might begin at the investigative level, where the police should be required to record, on either videotape or audiotape, both interrogations and confessions.

Second, serious efforts must be made to eliminate criminal abuses of law-enforcement power. Attorney General Janet Reno knows firsthand the kind of outrageous behavior that goes on in high-profile murder cases. In 1989, as a Florida district attorney, Reno was personally responsible for the release of James Richardson, the man who was sentenced to death for the murder of his seven children, when evidence emerged that police officers and prosecutors had framed him. As the nation's top judicial officer, Reno knows, particularly since Waco, how unwilling law-enforcement officers are to police their own. She should therefore appreciate the need to establish independent special prosecutors or inspectors general in every state to investigate and prosecute police, prosecutorial, and judicial misconduct.

Third, routine DNA testing must be made available to inmates who believe that it will demonstrate their innocence. And better procedures are needed to ensure both that DNA and other evidence is preserved as long as a person is incarcerated and that the defense is given full access to it.

Fourth, the use of jailhouse snitches, many of whom are known pathological liars, must be drastically curtailed. Such informant testimony should be inadmissible unless it is backed by corroborating evidence.

Fifth, better methods of judicial selection are needed to ensure an independent judiciary. Ultimately this means eliminating the election of judges and thus removing the blight of judges who not only take campaign contributions from the attorneys who try cases before them but also routinely place their own political and financial interests above the Bill of Rights.

Sixth, the American Bar Association should press for adoption by the states of a provision in the American Law Institute's "Model Penal Code" which is designed to minimize the risk of convicting and executing innocent people. The provision would prohibit a death sentence if the evidence, albeit sufficient to sustain a guilty verdict, "does not foreclose all

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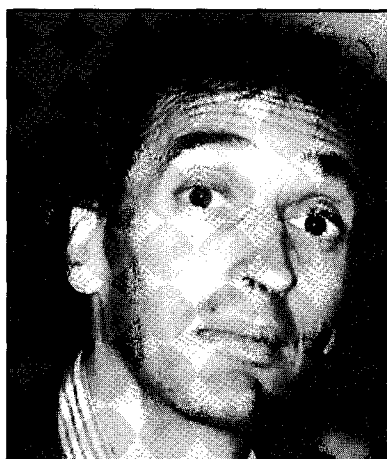
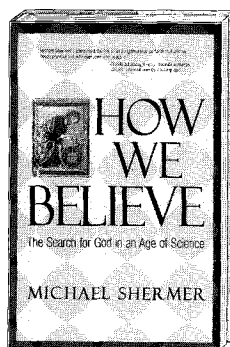
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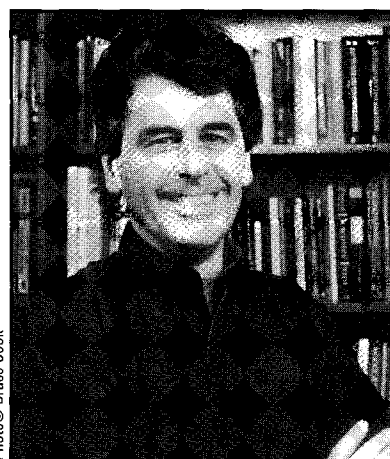
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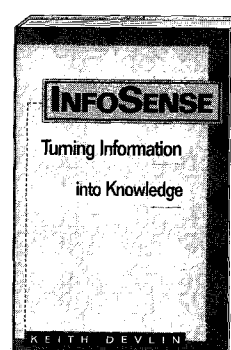
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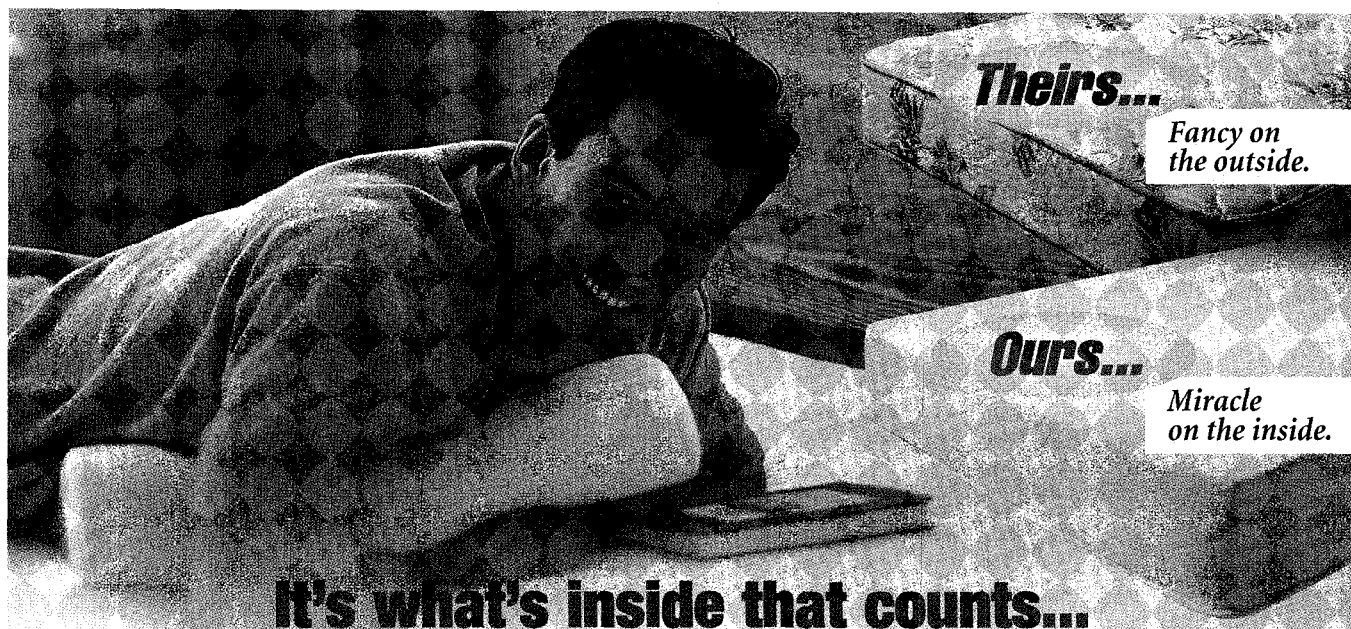
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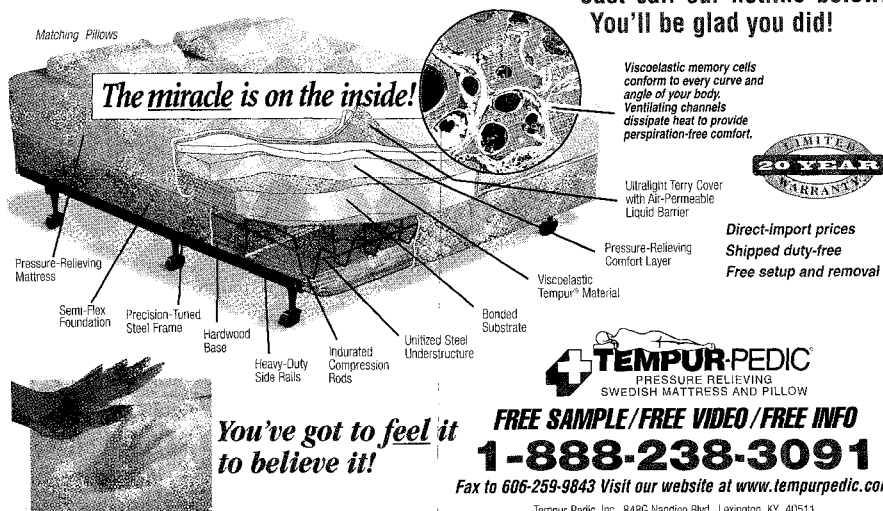
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doubt respecting the defendant's guilt." To date no state has adopted this "residual doubt" provision.

Seventh, whether an official's corruption, simple witness error, or the racism of an arresting officer led to wrongful imprisonment, the victims of such miscarriages should be compensated. Unfortunately, those who have been wrongfully sentenced find it nearly impossible to rid themselves of the taint of criminality, and tough-on-crime legislators don't seem terribly distressed about these victims of the system. Only fourteen states have statutory compensation for people who have been wrongfully incarcerated. Federal law provides a miserly \$5,000, regardless of time served.

Eighth, and most important, the right to counsel and to due process must be given substance through the creation of adequately funded nationwide public-defender services. Both the existing systems of court-appointed counsel, which are rife with conflicts of interest, and the unconscionable contract systems that rely on low-bid attorneys have to go. In addition, states need to adopt and enforce reasonable standards for the appointment and performance of defense attorneys in capital cases, such as those proposed by the American Bar Association a decade ago. The *Strickland* decision's grant of immunity to incompetent lawyers should be overturned, and the Justice Department should facilitate this by joining the next viable Sixth Amendment challenge to go before the Supreme Court. The history of the Sixth Amendment since *Gideon* demonstrates that it is not enough to assert that everyone has a right to an attorney. Criminal defendants, and capital defendants especially, need attorneys who are well trained, experienced, and adequately paid.

Some outspoken death-penalty supporters who favored defunding the Post-Conviction Defender Organizations now say they favor funding post-conviction representation in capital cases. Others say they want to see competent counsel provided at the trial stage, in order to avoid unnecessary appeals and overturned convictions. But there's a catch: conservatives invariably want to consign the issue of spending to the states, which is where the Sixth Amendment has been moldering, a sort of discretionary constitutional right, since its adoption, in 1791.

How much should the states be spending to ensure equal protection for every U.S. citizen? Nobody really knows. Robert Spangenberg, the country's leading authority on indigent-defense programs, says the country spent about \$1 billion on indigent defense in 1986, or about \$200 per case—a "totally inadequate" figure, he says. The quality of indigent defense varies state to state, from quite good to reprehensible. Spangenberg says that it would cost the State of Florida, to cite one example, about \$25 million a year to properly handle its backlog of capital appeals alone. The state legislature has currently budgeted \$6 million. Where the states will get the money to defend the rights of a constituency with no political power remains the big question. What is clearly needed is some sort of permanent funding mechanism that is not subject to annual

budget skirmishes and political fashions. One idea is to make indigent defense a fixed percentage of some other annual budget, such as the prosecutor's budget—which, in particular, would lock in the notion that fair representation is a *sine qua non* for both sides if justice is to be genuine. As a result of lawsuits that successfully challenged the constitutionality of programs that often provided defendants with unqualified or horribly overworked lawyers, several states and counties have been forced to increase indigent-defense spending and to adopt basic standards of competency for their public defenders. Most recently the State of Connecticut agreed to hire approximately eighty new attorneys and support-staff members for its public-defender system in response to a lawsuit brought by the American Civil Liberties Union. More challenges along these lines by, among others, the organized bar should be encouraged.

For its part, the organized bar shares responsibility for the fact that there are currently scores of people on death row without lawyers, and for the state of indigent defense in general. In 1982 the American Bar Association issued a report on what it called "the crisis in indigent defense funding," in which it advised, "We must be willing to put our money where our mouth is; we must be willing to make the constitutional mandate a reality." Seventeen years later there is little for which to thank the ABA. It does provide expert resources to law firms handling capital cases, and it funds its own Death Penalty Representation Project, which over the past eighteen months has enlisted forty-five law firms to defend death-row inmates without charge. But the project's director calls it little more than a "small Band-Aid on a gaping wound." The ABA has done a good job of documenting serious problems with the administration of the death penalty and the crisis in indigent defense. But the ABA, the largest voluntary professional association in the country, also represents one of the wealthiest and most privileged segments of American society. With a few notable exceptions, these generally well-informed professionals from one year to the next do little more than approve high-minded resolutions condemning the status quo that has been so good to them. If state and local bar associations were really serious about addressing these problems (and there's little evidence that they are), they might underwrite a model indigent-defense program or two, or a capital-representation office. If nothing else, they should be standing up for equal justice by lobbying their state legislators to find the money to finance public defenders at levels that don't make a mockery of the Sixth Amendment.

Finally, the Justice Department or a presidential commission should follow the example of Canada, and examine why our courts continue to sentence innocent people to death, and whether we have in fact executed innocent people. The steady accumulation of wrongful convictions and death sentences in the United States constitutes a *prima facie* case that we are dealing with widespread, systemic flaws in the administration of justice. Until those flaws are corrected, we should declare a moratorium on executions. ☼

Passengers

by JULIE SCHUMACHER

MARIEL'S daughter, Finny, accidentally pushed a classmate off the jungle gym at recess, and the unlucky girl hit her head, hard, on the way down. She was knocked out, and after she stood up and wobbled into the building, she had a seizure; the other children, including eight-year-old Finny, stood in a knot around her as she thrashed as if in rage on the tile floor. A ribbon of urine from the fallen girl approached Finny's shoes.

Mariel got the phone call at work.

In four days they were supposed to leave the country on a long-awaited family vacation, and she worried, glancing at the message from the school nurse, that Finny (a nickname for Fiona) had a cold or the flu. *Goddamn lousy timing*, Mariel thought, dialing the nurse's number and scanning her desk for what could be worked on at home, what could be canceled, what could be transferred immediately to the trash. It was Tuesday; Finny could be home for the rest of the week, and Mariel hoped she would recover by Saturday morning, when they would board the plane in Minneapolis for Cancun, strap themselves into their seats, and inhale four hours' worth of recirculated air, which Finny declared made her vomit.

"I'll let you talk to her," the nurse said, in response to Mariel's question about how Finny was feeling. Mariel thought this was a little odd—did the nurse have no diagnostic skills? The phone clicked. She heard a shuffling. A sniffle. "Finn? Finny? Is that you?" She pictured her daughter's round face, a sweet freckled pie, the short braids ragged and uneven because Finny had wanted to braid them herself.

"I hurt Nan," Finny said. "I didn't mean to."

"Nan who?" Mariel asked, searching beneath her desk for her shoes. "You aren't sick?"

"I pushed her," Finny said. She had a way of confessing to her crimes that involved copious amounts of self-deprecation, and Mariel didn't want to let her get started.

"Of course you didn't mean to." Finny's sniffing was probably the result of some sadistic line of questioning at the hands of the school nurse, a broomlike woman with short thick hair that stood up unnaturally on her head. True, Finny had a tendency to be clumsy—some kind of lapse occurred between what her body felt and how it moved. Still, she was a gentle and shy girl, emotionally frail, and now she was obviously traumatized. "Is Nan at the nurse's office too?"

"No," Finny said.

"She's back in class?"

A pause.

"Finny?"

"They took her away," Finny whispered, and Mariel could hear the tears gathering, the monsoon clouds massing just offshore.

"I'm sure she'll be fine," Mariel said, but the phone had been repossessed by Mrs. Wassler, child-hater, Nazi-nurse.

"You need to pick up your daughter and stop by the office," Mrs. Wassler said. Mariel heard Finny sobbing. "I'll keep Fiona here with me."

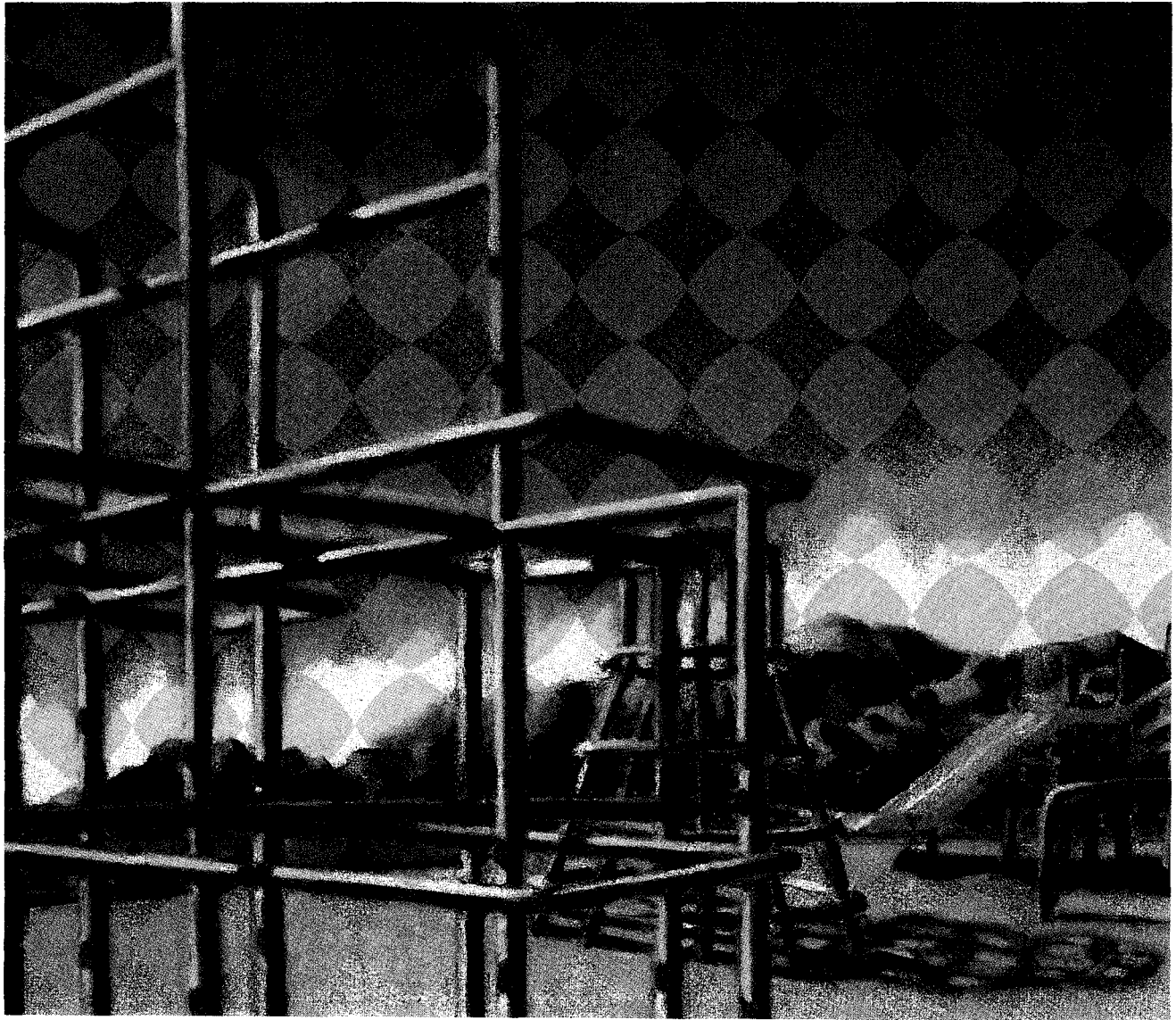
ONE of the things that most often surprised Mariel about being a parent was the desire for other parents' approval. Some days, despite her better understanding, she felt, regarding Finny, as if she had produced an object out of clay and placed the object on a table to be evaluated, compared. No one could argue that Finny was the brightest in a sizable group of children, or the best-looking, or the most adept. *Oh, but look!* Mariel wanted to say. No child on earth could be more endearing, more humanly whole. She knew that. She understood Finny's graces. Still, there she stood at the edge of the table, nudging her sweet imperfect object, both of them subject to the whims and critiques of passersby.

Mariel held her daughter by the shoulders and looked into dead children turning up in the trunks of cars, bombs falling had tried to shield Finny. But it hadn't worked

She tried to resist evaluating her only child, but the feelings rose up in her, unbidden. And Finny was so sensitive, so easily discouraged. She was bound to be one of those girls, Mariel knew, who would look into the mirror at thirteen and suffer from the lovely roundness of her face, her strong and shapely forearms, her dusky hair. She was a highly compassionate child, prone to cry at the sight of roadkill, and timid in the face of cruelty. Though she liked to play with other children, she often preferred to play alone, and her games were eccentric and imaginative, unintelligible to others. Mariel loved her so fiercely that her teeth hurt when she

looked at Finny; at the same time, she felt in herself the desire to correct her daughter, to pinch and mold her—a little more confidence and sass, a little less fear.

On the way into the school building Mariel had to walk a gauntlet of older children, and she couldn't help wondering if they knew who she was, if they knew about "the accident" or had leaned out their classroom windows to see the ambulance come. It was stunning to see the fifth- and sixth-grade children, some of them huge, the girls with breasts, the boys tackling one another, already needing feminine notice and encouragement and approval: they mugged and opened the door for



her speckled eyes. The world was full of horrifying things—
cancer and other illness—from which, despite misgivings, Mariel
Finny sensed the existence of disaster, and was afraid

Mariel in a kind of rehearsal for the upcoming mating dance, displaying their gaudy colors like so many birds.

She found Finny asleep on the nurse's blue-plastic couch, her dress hiked up, a hole near the crotch of her tights exposed, her head lolling back against the wall. So vulnerable. How could Mariel allow her outside in the world unguarded? Mrs. Wassler, thank God, had been called to officiate at a skinned knee somewhere; the assistant principal filled Mariel in. The other girl, Nan, had been taken to the hospital around noon; apparently she was stable, but she'd had a concussion and would probably be kept overnight for observation. The family was listed in the phone book if Mariel wanted to call them.

Mariel looked at Finny, still oblivious on the couch. Finny slept like the dead unless she was having nightmares, in which case she lurked around the edges of her parents' bed like a nervous spirit. Now she lay limp and removed from the world, as if planning to sleep for a hundred years.

"I'm sure it was an accident," the assistant principal said. "Finny's a great kid."

Mariel felt hideously, profoundly grateful. "I know that," she snapped. After wrenching Finny from sleep, she signed an absentee paper and took her home.

DURING the car ride Finny was quiet, morose. She nodded her head very slightly to some kind of internal music, a habit that made her look obsessive. Mariel reached over the back of her seat and touched Finny's cheek, to stop her. When asked how the accident happened, Finny dutifully replied, as if she'd been coached, "I wasn't careful."

"Did you help her up?" Mariel asked.

"After she woke up, I did," Finny said. "She was crying."

"Accidents happen," Mariel said.

Finny was nodding her head again.

"Maybe we'll call her when we get home, to see how she's feeling. Do you think that's a good idea? Finny?"

"She's in the hospital," Finny said. In the rearview mirror Mariel could see only the cinnamon-colored smudges that were Finny's eyebrows and the zigzag part in her hair. When she adjusted the mirror to see her better, Finny moved out of her line of sight.

"The hospital has phones," Mariel said. "Phones in every room."

"She might not know it was an accident," Finny said.

"Well," Mariel said, "that's just another reason for us to call."

At home, though, Mariel discovered that calling wasn't easy. The injured child's first name had apparently been shortened to Nan in the public schools, but her last name was a tangle of consonants. Either the admissions clerk had spelled it wrong or the hospital didn't yet have the girl on record. Looking up the family's home phone number in the school directory, Mariel understood from the address that the family was poor. Nan didn't live within walking distance of

the school, in one of the comfortable suburbs, but was probably bused in on one of the yellow trawlers that cruised through the white neighborhoods, small, tired faces at every window.

For the first few hours no one answered the phone. Finally, in the late afternoon, a child answered. No, her mother and father weren't there. Who was this?

"A friend," Mariel said, hating herself. Finny was playing on the carpet in the other room. "We wondered how Nan was doing. Is she better?"

A radio in another language was clamoring for attention in the background. "Nan's better," the voice said.

"Is she out of the hospital?"

"You want to talk to Nan?"

"No, that's fine. But she's at home?"

"Nan's at home."

"That's great," Mariel said. "Thanks for telling us." She looked at Finny, who was clearly listening. Whoever was on the other end hung up the phone. "Do you want to know what they said?"

Finny didn't move. She was hunched over a pile of coins that she was supposed to be learning to count; instead, twisting the assignment in her own odd way, she was wrapping each coin in a piece of paper and masking tape and then dropping it into a plastic cup.

"They said she's better. Maybe you'll see her in school tomorrow."

Finny shook the paper-covered coins, scowled into the cup, and unrolled a longer strip of tape.

"You can apologize again," Mariel said. "If you want to. It might make you feel better."

"She won't be in school," Finny said.

"Why not?" Mariel hated to think of Finny as a junior fatalist.

"She just won't be." Finny's shirt was a little tight, Mariel noticed. Finny developed crushes on articles of clothing and didn't like to let them go.

After Finny went to bed, Mariel unwrapped a few of the paper-covered coins; then she gave up and threw the rest away.

AS always when crises came up, Mariel's husband, David, was traveling. She talked to him late that night on the phone.

"So she feels sad about it," he said. "Even guilty. How could she not? That seems appropriate. It'll teach her to be more careful."

David's sunny disposition could be annoying. Though on a day-to-day basis it was essential (he buoyed and steadied them, both life preserver and anchor), the way he glibly searched for the upside of all difficulties made Mariel insane. He was an overgrown Shirley Temple.

"She already knows she wasn't careful," Mariel said. "She's already got the hair shirt on. That's not the problem."

"Did we sign her up for T-ball again this year?" David



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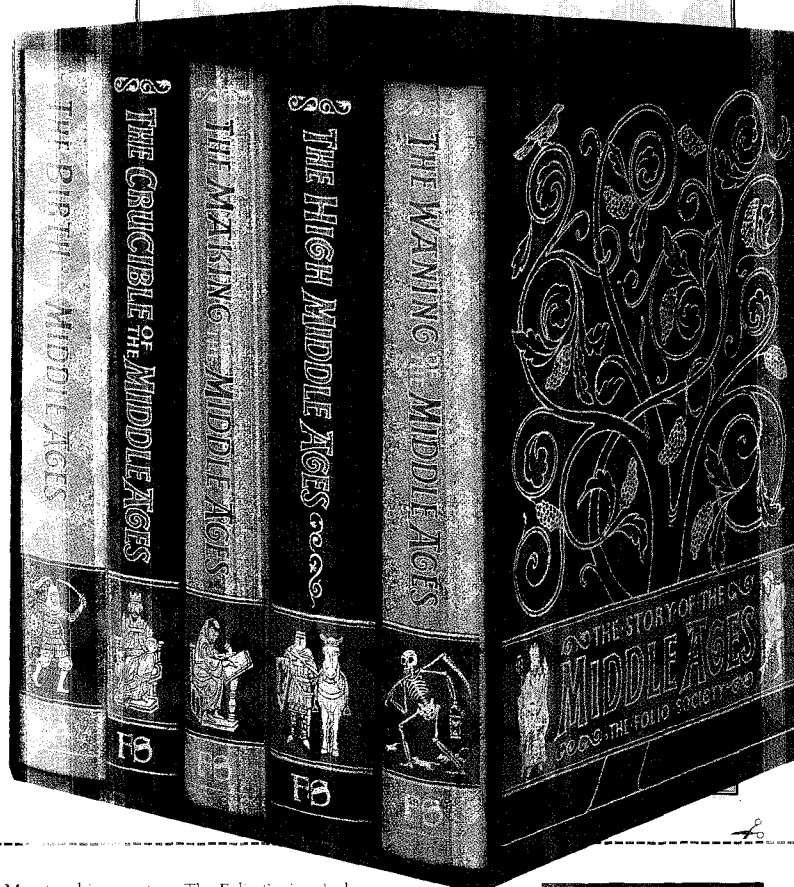
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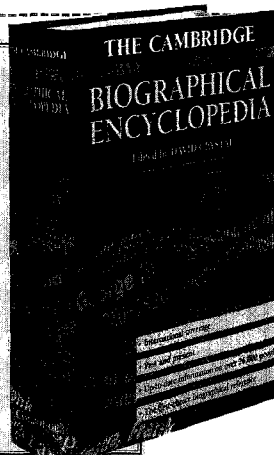
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asked. In an effort to socialize her and improve her coordination, David had pushed Finny into organized sports the summer before. Holding the bat or trying to catch the ball, she had looked miserable and ill suited to the game. Observing his daughter's wretched performance, David had cheered while Mariel writhed in the stands; poor Finny was rooted like a post out in left field, as if her arms and legs, her very body, were a reproach. It occurred now to Mariel that Finny had looked like that on the way home from school; she had climbed into the back seat of the car gingerly, treating her body like a weapon or a foreign thing.

"I see no reason to repeat painful mistakes," Mariel said.

"It wasn't painful. Finny's fine. You worry about her too much."

Mariel could hear him shuffling through a set of papers; she hated it when he multi-tasked her, working while he talked to her on the phone. "I think she's depressed, actually," she said. "I might make a phone call about our tickets."

The shuffling stopped. "What about them?"

"Well, I'm not sure we can waltz off and leave if this girl is still injured. I haven't talked to the parents. And maybe Finny should see a doctor."

"She isn't the one who hit her head."

"She isn't happy," Mariel said, wanting to cry. "I think any person her age deserves to be happy."

David sighed. Maybe, secretly, he detested her, Mariel thought. And why not? It probably showed good judgment; at such moments she detested herself. "Canceling our vacation isn't going to cheer Finny up," he said. "It'll do her good to get away. Think how much fun she had last year." This was the ultimate argument, of course; how could she deprive Finny of going? Imagine making her stay at home, making her think she was being punished.

"I'll go if we can drink a lot," Mariel said. "Starting earlier in the day than we did last year."

"We'll start on the plane," David said, "if that'll make you feel better."

"It might."

"Mariel," he said, "you know, different people are happy in different ways."

"Tell me about Finny's way, then."

David hesitated. "It's different from ours," he said. "I'll see you soon."

THE next morning Finny didn't want to go to school. Mariel had expected this—the crumbling confidence, the tentativeness, the fear—but now that it had arrived, her strategies for combating it seemed absurd. She felt listless and impotent, unable to resist the sight of Finny in her favorite dog pajamas, an inch of flesh showing where the top didn't meet the pants.

"One day," Mariel said. "You can stay home today, and that's all. Not tomorrow." Together they ate muffins in the

kitchen in their pajamas, Mariel halfheartedly reading the paper, nothing but major and minor disasters everywhere, and pushing aside the dirty dishes from the night before. Finny ate half a muffin, dissecting it for raisins and nuts, and then slipped away from the table to start one of her peculiar games, putting Cheerios into a set of plastic cars and sending them on trips around the kitchen floor.

"Maybe Nan's home today too," Mariel said, without knowing she was going to say it. "Maybe you were right—maybe you're both taking sick days."

Finny paused. She had her back to her mother, but Mariel saw her open the little door to a plastic car, take out the oat-flavored occupants, and eat them.

"We'll call her—and then we'll call the hotel in Mexico and ask them how hot it is there today," she said, knowing that the newspaper in her hand listed international forecasts on the second page. "It'll be good to have hot weather for a change, won't it, Finny?"

The girl shrugged, her broad back a site of pathos. She drove her army of edible passengers out the door.

AT noon Mariel took a break from several hours of indifferent progress on the computer and called a friend at Finny's school. The friend, Anna, was a teacher's aide, a woman who volunteered in her son's classroom to the extent that she might as well have been home-schooling him.

"Oh, I heard," Anna said. "Poor Finny. Poor Nan. This is one of those awful things that just happen."

Mariel said that she wasn't sure *what* it was, or how to classify it, but she was hoping it was over, and had anyone at school talked to Nan's family? The girl wasn't back at school yet, was she?

There was a pause. "I think Dorothy, the social worker, talked to them," Anna said.

The tone of her voice gave Mariel the sensation that her stomach had suddenly been flooded with cold water. "What did the social worker say?"

"Well, I think she's still bleeding from the ear, which isn't good. But she did wake up a couple of times. She's still in the hospital."

"But I called them," Mariel said. "I talked to them on the phone. No one said anything about bleeding. Just yesterday they said she was home."

"That's probably a language issue," Anna said. "Two of the daughters—and the mother, I think—are nicknamed Nan. Their full names are really long. We always get them mixed up in the school records."

Mariel's eyes filled. "What does that mean, that she's bleeding from the ear?"

"I only heard this secondhand," Anna said. "Are you keeping Finny home?"

Mariel wondered if Anna was implying that Finny should be kept at home for her own safety. Would a playground ven-

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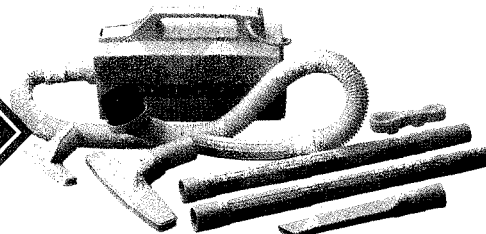
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detta form? "We're so sorry," Mariel whispered, speaking for herself as well as Finny, and also, she realized, addressing anyone who might hear about Nan and imagine that Finny was too young for remorse.

When Mariel hung up the phone, she saw Finny standing behind her in the hall. She was stock-still on the carpet, her body soft, listening.

"Nan's not home yet," Mariel said. It was all she could think of to say.

Finny nodded. "She might stay there for a long, long time." She looked like a round-faced oracle, a seer.

"Don't say that," Mariel said.

Finny sat down.

"What's in the car?" Mariel asked. "Are they little people?"

"Yes," Finny said, "But they don't know that that's what they are."

"What do they think they are?"

Finny paused. "They only think they're people when the door shuts behind them," she said. "Then they remember." Mariel watched her put a Cheerio behind the wheel of a blue Camaro. The door clicked shut. Finny looked up at Mariel, who smiled and tried not to shiver.

The cargo of doomed and ignorant passengers waited, helpless, on the floor.

SMALL AIRPORT IN BRAZIL

9:31 in the departure lounge, nearly
deserted. Monday night—everyone here

is a little too tired to be traveling
to another city. I search for an interesting face

behind the newspapers, and light on
a young man:

maybe 31?—slim and well-dressed (that is,
dressed with some thought): his tan

jacket and pressed gray pants in muted
harmony with a pale-yellow shirt

open at the collar (no tie, though there may
have been one earlier).

They fit him elegantly, suit him, suit
his thin, sandy hair and pale,

fair skin. His rimless glasses suggest
seriousness, not fashion: a tone

confirmed by the forward gaze behind them—
through them.

He wears a touchingly simple
gold band on his finger, another example

of natural elegance—his wife must
share his taste.

Is he on his way to her? Is she picking him up
at another small airport? Will they embrace

warmly, gracefully, when he arrives?
Or will she be up waiting for him at home, dinner

on the table? Or not—already asleep
when he finally gets in, after her own long day.

Or is he on his way to yet another hotel,
after a week of hotels?

—tired of hotels; while his attractive,
witty, attentive wife, with her eloquent cheekbones

and slightly sunken cheeks,
begins to show her own weariness of

spending so many nights alone.

They'll cost something, these nights.
Everything costs something when you have to make

your way through the world—
even if you're not new to the idea,

or just beginning
not to be new to it.

—LLOYD SCHWARTZ

THE next morning, Thursday, Finny didn't want to change into her school clothes or brush her hair. "You can't stay home forever," Mariel said, realizing that despite her dictum of the day before, Finny must have imagined doing just that: If one day, why not two? Why not four? This was an opportune moment for Daddy's cheerful demeanor, but of course Daddy wasn't home. "Up, up!" Mariel said, lifting Finny beneath the arms, but the effect was more violent than fun. It took her several minutes just to get a clean shirt over Finny's head. "Listen, Fiona," she finally said, "there's a saying about getting right back on a horse after you fall off it, and school is the horse in this instance, and Nan's accident is the fall, and you have to go back to school afterward. You can't stay home. I'd be a lousy parent if I let you stay home. You don't want me to be a lousy parent."

Finny stared down at her toes. She had short, flat feet, like little paddles. Sometimes Mariel thought that Finny had inherited the worst of her parents' characteristics. Mariel ended up dressing Finny entirely, pulling socks over the sweaty toes, pushing the arms into the sleeves of a pink sweater, brushing the fine, beloved, tangled brown hair. Clipping a duck-shaped barrette into position over one ear, she looked at Finny's sweet face and saw unmistakable dread. She felt she was dressing her only child for slaughter.

"It'll be all right," she said, considering and rejecting the idea of letting Finny stay home for a second day. How had she ended up with such a horribly sensitive child? She personally knew plenty of children who could have pushed a dozen playmates off the jungle gym (or even off the roof of the school building) and never batted an eye. The difference was that those other children's victims were always fine. Finny had had bad luck. And maybe that was part of the problem: Finny was beginning to believe herself unlucky. Mariel held her by the shoulders and looked into her speckled eyes. The world was full of horrifying things—dead children turning up in the trunks of cars, bombs falling, cancer and other illness—from which, despite misgivings, Mariel had tried to shield her daughter. But it hadn't worked: Finny sensed the existence of disaster, and was afraid. All children were fearful now and then, but Finny's kind of fear was different. She wasn't afraid of lightning or the dark. Mariel looked into Finny's eyes and saw that Finny was afraid of herself—of her own body and the harm it could effect, of its awful dangers, of its secret, unintentional power.

WHEN Finny was born, Mariel, more than David, had been terrified. He was the oldest in a big family and remembered carrying and feeding his brothers and sisters; calm and confident, he cradled seven-pound Finny in one arm and swooped her around the house, singing tunes from *South Pacific* and *Oklahoma!* Mariel tried to imitate his casual attitude but couldn't; she was convinced at every moment that something gruesome was about to happen. Finny would choke on a button, or swallow poison, or impale herself on a pencil while tumbling

headlong down the stairs. Mariel's mind was an endless catalogue of accidents that could rear up like monsters in the lives of the unsuspecting. She was relieved when Finny turned three and then four and five; she seemed further from danger, sure on her feet, less liable to kill herself out of sheer ignorance.

But now that the obvious, dreaded physical dangers were past, and Finny could walk and ride a bike and swim and recognize a skull and crossbones and recite her address and phone number in case she found herself lost among helpful strangers, an entirely new set of hazards was revealed, and they were internal. No matter how vigilant Mariel was, no matter how carefully she stood guard, she couldn't interpose herself between Finny and Finny's imagination. She was doomed to pace outside the inner room and hope for the best, like an old-fashioned husband waiting for news of his child's birth.

And Mariel suffered doubts and anxieties of her own. Some days, reading the paper, she was convinced that the world would soon come crashing to an end—and how much easier it would be, how much more bearable, if she weren't in the position of having to explain it all to innocent Finny. *These are the things we've done wrong, here are our crimes, this is how we've fouled our nest and murdered one another, and now we hand this ugly, uninhabitable conglomeration on to you.* She was beyond being able to speak about this fear, even to David. Especially to David. At times, horrified at her own train of thought, she almost wished that Finny hadn't been born.

DAVID came home early and unexpectedly in the middle of the day and called Mariel at the office. "I talked to Varda," he said. "He doesn't mind if we visit."

"Visit?" Mariel asked. "Varda who?"

"Nan's father," he said, as if it were obvious that he had canceled a meeting, flown home early, spirited a phone number and a relationship out of the air, and now knew the injured girl's whole family by their first names. "She's at Children's Hospital. Sixth floor. Meet me there and then we can pick Finny up together after school."

"Right now?"

David waited, exhaling. Mariel looked at the mess on her desk. "All right," she said. "I'll meet you in the main lobby in an hour."

IN the full-length bed with its metal side rails, Nan Gnuadatridgida seemed to be half the size of Finny, her limbs no larger than sticks. *So small*, Mariel thought. The girl's thick black hair lay uncombed against the pillow; a tube invaded one delicate nostril, and bruises up and down her forearm indicated multiple attempts to start an IV. Mariel wanted to collapse at the very sight of her, to kneel at the foot of the bed and press her forehead to the floor.

In the hallway David had introduced himself to Varda, giving him a two-handed handshake-embrace all the way up to the shoulder. David was an ideal presence at any sickbed;

calm and friendly and soft-spoken, he never threatened to fall apart or cry. Now he swept the black bangs away from Nan's forehead. "She's beautiful," he said, and in fact she was. He wrote their phone numbers on the back of a get-well card.

The worst moment of the visit came when the little girl's mother walked through the door, carrying a doll and a cup of coffee. *There I am*, Mariel thought, and now I've walked into a room and caught sight of the monsters that did this to my child. She wanted the other mother to throw her coffee, or shout, or try to push Mariel out a window. Instead the woman barely looked at them or spoke; she sat in an orange-vinyl

probably part cultural difference, he said, part sleep deprivation, part language barrier. The important thing was that the doctors felt Nan was getting better. It was definitely a concussion; and yes, she'd had a seizure. But she was periodically waking, and the signs were good. One of the nurses had offered to keep them informed.

Still, Mariel felt poisonous, depressed. "We won't tell Finny we were here," she said, spying their separate cars in the parking lot.

David looked shocked. "I already told her. I stopped by her classroom on the way over and got her to make a little card for



chair beside the bed, put down the coffee and the doll, and began to stroke her daughter's arm. She didn't have time for anything but this, Mariel thought, even if the whole world went to hell; she had time only to coax her daughter back from the strange new territory she had entered on her own, to summon Nan back and see her healed.

Later David tried to downplay the mother's reaction. It was

when Nan wakes up. I left it on the nightstand. I thought it would make everyone feel better."

What a strange idea, Mariel thought. A piece of construction paper as a means of healing. David talked on and on, describing his conversation with Finny's teacher. Mariel watched his lips move, interpreting the words as they left his mouth. She had heard about people who took their young

children to wakes and funerals to expose them to death and mortality, people for whom every hideous and painful aspect of life was a teachable moment. She wondered if David would want to do that, and whether he would be capable of turning the whole unpleasant mess with Finny and Nan into some kind of fuzzy cultural-awareness lesson. Sometimes Mariel felt amazed that she had married—what an odd custom, joining forces for life with an alien being.

"You said you weren't worried," she said. "But here you are, home early."

David walked her across the parking lot. As she drove away, she saw him looking up at the sixth-floor windows, one hand in his jacket pocket, the other absently tapping the roof of his car.

ON Friday afternoon David spoke to Varda again; Nan was slowly improving, and she had eaten soup and toast. Having made up her mind to do so, Mariel made a speech in bed that night. She was grateful, she said, that David had made contact with Nan's family. She was ashamed of herself for not setting such a forthright example for Finny.

David rolled toward her under the covers. "I wasn't doing it only for Finny."

"No, but it's a good thing," she said. "It was a good thing to do no matter why you did it."

David's hand navigated the tangle of flannel sheets and found her hip. He was vacillating, she knew, between harbors: sex on the one hand, and the rocking cradle of sleep on the other. She decided to wait, to see what he would choose.

The hand twitched once and then trailed away. "It even occurred to me," he said, "that friendly communication could help discourage a lawsuit."

"A lawsuit?" Mariel said. "What do you mean?" Astoundingly, she had never even thought about a lawsuit.

"I doubt it would happen," David said. He kissed her and thumped his pillow. He didn't often talk about his personal demons (maybe he reasoned that acknowledgment alone would afford them a kind of reality or power), but lying awake as his breathing slowed, Mariel knew that they were waiting in the dark regardless of whether she understood them, or whether she discerned their ragged shapes in the midnight air.

THROUGHOUT the trip the next day, in the cab, in the airport, and in the plane, Finny insisted on sitting close to David—maybe because she had missed him, Mariel thought, or maybe because her mother had proved to be useless during this stressful week.

During takeoff the fact that Nan was still in the hospital made Mariel clench her teeth in dread. It seemed to be tempting fate to indulge in a luxury vacation while the poor girl lingered in the hospital; it was tantamount to begging the gods to strike them down, to hurl bolts of lightning at their very section of the plane. For Finny's sake she forced herself to offer

bubbly comments about the week to come. Finny was quiet; it was hard to know whether to attribute this to motion-sickness tablets or to depression. She fell asleep over New Orleans, flopping across an empty seat, and Mariel hoped that someone would look at her in disapproval, or ask her to move her bare feet farther from the aisle—Mariel would personally rip out that person's hair.

At the airport in Cancun the heat and light entered them. Mariel felt transported. Travel always gave her that sensation—of stepping through a door into a new, exotic compartment in which she would eat someone else's food and sleep in someone else's bed, while her own life lay flat and uninhabited at home.

They spent the night in town and then rented a car and drove south, the highway littered with billboards and trash and wild hibiscus, wrinkled women selling pots and tortillas at the edges of the smaller roads. The resort that they had come back to was out of the way and subdued, a quiet beach without college students or discos, just a few miles of white sand and phosphorescent blue water. Their room was a separate little thatched-roof structure halfway between the tiled swimming pool and the Caribbean; the year before, Finny had wandered dreamily between the two bodies of water every day.

Mariel wondered if this year would be different. *Let there be pleasures in life that I receive without earning or deserving them*, she thought; *let some of these unmerited pleasures remain the same*. She unpacked all their clothes, reciting fervent agnostic prayers in the stifling room, while David walked Finny down to the beach. Mariel took it for granted that neither of them would have thought to apply sunscreen.

"What do you think?" David asked her that night, as they watched the sun melt into the exuberant flowering trees that flanked the pool.

Mariel contemplated her drink—she had lost count of what number it was—and answered absently that she'd seen too many plants, too many birds, too much water, for one location. Everything here existed in abundance, as if to point out the stinginess of their own uninspired northern landscape.

"No, I meant Finny," David said, and instantly Mariel was alert. What about her? What did he think? How could she have let her mind wander?

Finny was asleep on a cot in the room behind them, the door propped open with a stone.

"I think she loves it here," he said. "I think she was born for this kind of climate."

"She's already sunburned," Mariel said.

"I mean temperamentally. She loves the sun, the heat. I think winter makes her pinched. Down here she can be more open."

Mariel often wondered if David analyzed Finny the way she did—if he spent an unhealthy amount of time reviewing her strengths, her foibles. "She didn't play with any of the other kids," she said. "She spent the whole day by herself."

"She likes being by herself. Those kids were jerks."

This was true. The other American children, all of them

skinny and loud and absurdly normal, more like ads for children than the real thing, had screamed and cavorted and plunged obnoxiously into the pool all afternoon, while Finny, ten feet away, had methodically made slits in the center of several dozen leaves, inserting a stick and two blades of grass into each leaf and laying the altered flora on the sand in an intricate pattern. At such moments Mariel suffered dual and opposite visions of Finny's future: she might end up a lumpkin, an eccentric in a hillside cabin; or she might be a visionary with a sense of humor and compassion, a pioneer.

"Did you get through to them on the phone?" David asked, without looking in her direction.

Mariel stared into the crushed ice in her glass.

"I saw you take the phone card out of your wallet after lunch."

"Spy," she said.

David reached into his own wallet and took out a piece of paper with a number on it—the same number she had called that afternoon. "I figured I'd let you do it," he said. "And maybe you'd let me know if there was any news."

"I tried and tried, but I couldn't get through."

David put down his drink and walked to the blue-tiled steps that lead into the water. He turned to face her, but Mariel couldn't see his expression. He might have been welcoming or reprimanding.

"Of course I would let you know," Mariel said.

But she had probably spoken too late. David submerged himself in the water, disappearing into the thick and fragrant shadows at the edge of the pool.

HE didn't ask about any of her other phone calls. He played Frisbee with Finny, and took her snorkeling, and haggled over an ankle bracelet in the square. Meanwhile, Mariel struggled with unidentifiable coins, credit cards, phone cards, and Spanish recordings she couldn't understand. Finally, on the third day of the vacation, a margarita in hand though it was only noon, she heard a small miracle in the receiver: "Children's Hospital. Where may I direct your call?"

Mariel could see the ocean, two hundred yards away. The sun on her arms was a blessing. She closed her eyes to deny herself the beauty of the view. But there was a second miracle to come: Nan had been discharged and was now at home. Mariel spelled and respelled the family's name. Yes, the nurse was sure, the little girl with the concussion, she had definitely been discharged. Mariel spilled half the margarita onto herself with joy and then drank the rest of it in a swallow. She walked down to the beach to share the news with David.

"That's great," he said. Shading his eyes and smiling, he looked up at her from his chair.

"Don't you want to celebrate?" Possibly she had been obsessive and preoccupied; now, at last, she was ready to relax.

"I thought we *were* celebrating. We're drinking and eating out every day and sitting on a beach and spending money with abandon. What else do you think we should do?"

"I don't know," she said. "Something."

"Do you want to tell Finny?"

Of course she wanted to tell Finny. Finny would be relieved. Wouldn't she be relieved?

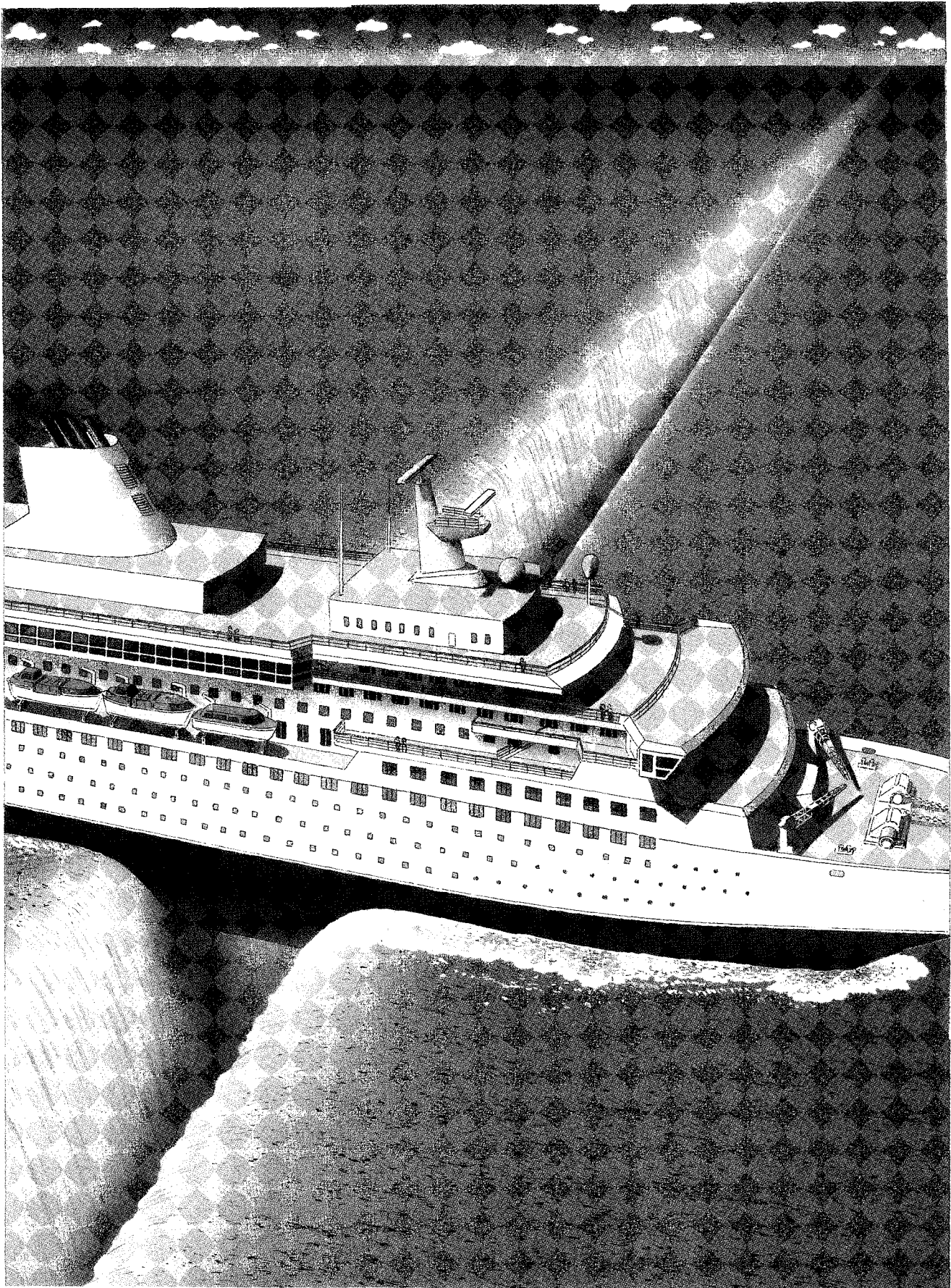
David pulled his lounge chair into the shade of a drooping palm.

Mariel sat down. Finny would be happy to know that Nan was fine, but she might still feel the same fear, the same sort of doubts about herself. She had still caused damage to Nan, whether or not the damage was undone.

Mariel felt her skin burning. She would talk to Finny in a little while. David was reading, the tip of his nose only inches from his book. She took two aspirins from her bag and watched the Mexican lifeguards under their thatched-roof *palapas*. At a distance they reminded her of something Finny would like to play with—mobile little figures in tiny houses on the sand. Two of the guards were gazing around at the scenery with binoculars, probably zeroing in on topless bathers. Mariel was formulating a cynical remark along these lines so that she could pass it on to David (he wasn't a cynic himself, but Mariel suspected that he secretly appreciated cynicism in other people) when two of the guards leaped down onto the sand and sprinted up the beach and into the water. Mariel stood up on her towel to watch. Just a few hundred yards away someone was waving from a raft. People were pointing and shouting in Spanish. She could see the two guards swimming furiously through the turquoise water; they were headed toward a second raft that seemed to be drifting out past the plastic buoys.

A lump rose in Mariel's throat—how ridiculous, to get choked up in total ignorance, no idea at all what was going on. Walking toward the water, she could see that the guards were pulling the more distant raft to shore. Was someone on it? Abruptly she felt panic crack open like an egg inside her: *Finny*. Wildly she looked around at the gathering crowd of gawkers on the beach until finally there was Finny, completely apart, facing away from the action, standing in the water up to her ankles, oblivious, poking at the brilliant smooth sand with a piece of driftwood. Her lips were moving; she was talking to herself. The shouting up the beach was getting louder. In just a few moments, inevitably, Finny would hear or notice the excitement, and she would be frightened all over again, struck by the dangers inherent in being alive. Mariel wanted to run to her and cover her eyes with a soft cloth, carry her up to the pool surrounded by pink hibiscus, such an unreal setting, and buy her a dish of mango-flavored ice cream and offer to paint her nails. She started toward her.

But David materialized out of nowhere and took her hand. Without looking at him, she understood. *Let Finny go*. Let her see what we're capable of: terror and rescue, all the evil and the good. Finny was turning around, the bright blue water a moving mirror at her feet. How can such a perfect place exist? Mariel wondered. Let Finny find the answers. Let her step alone into the small compartment, cast a final glance back at her mother, and close the door. ☼





FRANK STEWART

A New Horn

What was that odd-looking brass instrument you saw in a jazz club or at the symphony? It was David Monette's reinvention of the trumpet

MY most frequently asked question," says the jazz and classical virtuoso Wynton Marsalis, "is 'What do you call that? Is that a trumpet you're playing? That is the most beautiful instrument I've ever seen. Who made that—or did you design it?'"

With a mouthpiece permanently attached to its unpolished, handcrafted tubing, custom-built by David Monette,

of Portland, Oregon, perhaps the world's quirkiest and most audacious instrument maker, that is indeed a trumpet. Sometimes when Marsalis is asked to describe it, he says his Monette

by Carl Vigeland

trumpet is like an airplane. He's thinking of the trumpet's finlike braces when he says this, because they look a little like an airplane's wings. But he may be thinking, too, of how Monette has combined old

and new, taking the ancient concept of amplifying sound with a horn and applying modern science to make it work better.

When I met Dave Monette, in 1986, it had never occurred to me that one might re-create an instrument whose design and manufacture had undergone little change since the introduction of the piston valve, more than a century and a half ago. But anyone who has heard a concert performance marred by a trumpet's missed note—a "train wreck," players call it—might imagine the reasons for improving on the Wright brothers' model with a custom-made Gulfstream.

Today, as the price of a top-of-the-line Monette approaches \$50,000, some musicians are willing to wait a year for their

Wynton Marsalis playing a David Monette trumpet on tour with Jazz at Lincoln Center, in 1995, Marsalis has called Monette, of Portland, Oregon, "the greatest trumpet maker in the world"

orders to be filled, while others still scoff at the premise on which Monette has established his reputation. "I don't think Monette's horns represent a traditional sound of the trumpet," proclaims one of the latter group, Phil Smith, the principal trumpet player of the New York Philharmonic. Monette's fans tend to agree with Marsalis, who says, "Eventually you will get your sound out of whatever horn you play. But it's easier on a Monette. They're well balanced and centered. They're harmonized."

That two great musicians should even be talking about Monette may be the most improbable thing about this forty-three-year-old man's career. Less than two decades ago Monette was an occasional player with no formal higher education who dared to reinvent one of the most venerable instruments in Western music, an instrument capable of widely expressive gradations of tone and timbre.

One day in the early 1980s Monette made a cold call to Charles Schlueter, now the principal trumpet of the Boston Symphony Orchestra. An orchestral player of uncommon individual character, Schlueter had long been dissatisfied with the limitations of the production-model Bach trumpet, then still the standard for symphonic professionals. Schlueter, who often tinkered with his horns in his workshop, kept an open mind when someone reported an innovation or a breakthrough in the field. Monette called out of the blue, and soon offered Schlueter a new kind of leadpipe for his Bach trumpet (the leadpipe is the tube that connects a trumpet and its mouthpiece).

"He sent me about a half dozen, and I didn't really care for any of them," recalls Schlueter, who had never met Monette. "Dave later came to Cincinnati when the BSO played there on tour, and I tried one of his leadpipes on my Bach C trumpet. This time it felt terrific." (Middle C on a C trumpet—the horn used by most symphonic players—sounds like C on a piano. The more frequently used B-flat trumpet, on the other hand, is pitched a whole note lower than the piano.) "Dave soldered a plug to fit in the receiver on the leadpipe so it would stay put, and I used that combination when the BSO recorded the complete Stravinsky *Firebird* in April of 1983." Soon afterward Monette persuaded Schlueter to try a pro-

totype trumpet he had just built, and Schlueter liked it so much that he never played his Bach again.

When I was introduced to Monette, he was tweaking one of Schlueter's horns just before a BSO performance of Mahler's Fifth Symphony, a work whose first movement is a virtual concerto for trumpet. Bearded, wearing blue jeans and a white shirt, Monette focused intently on his work while around him orchestral players in the formal trappings of professional classical-music performance—long black dresses for the women, black pants and tails for the men—nervously anticipated the speaker's calling them to the stage. Monette said nothing as he examined Schlueter's horn. Then, patiently and purposefully, he scraped the inside of the mouthpiece and the leadpipe with a metal tool. The shavings from this process were too small to see, yet when Schlueter tried the trumpet afterward, he pronounced it a decided improvement. And, indeed, the sound was fuller and more present—live without being edgy. There was no doubt that whatever secret procedure Monette had used to make the trumpet play better had also increased Schlueter's confidence in it. He performed magnificently that night.

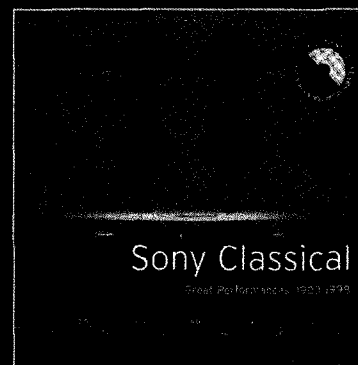
LIKE the great entrepreneur-inventors of an earlier era in American business, David Monette is so closely wedded to what he does that it is impossible to imagine one of his horns without him. Who he is and what he makes are inextricably linked.

Born in Kalamazoo, Michigan, Monette began playing the trumpet in fifth grade, but he never had a trumpet teacher. By the time he graduated from high school he was the single trumpet in an eight-piece band, a job he got, he says, because "I was the only person who tried out who knew how to read the arrangements." Monette was also practicing a lot, and "conventional equipment wouldn't let me do what I wanted to" on the horn. Playing pop tunes on tour with the band for a year, Monette strained to make his instrument sound the way he thought it should. The sound that came out was too bright, reminding him of the brass section of a football marching band or the blare at a high school hop. Moreover, the sound was limited in its expression. Nothing Monette played or heard others play matched the sound in

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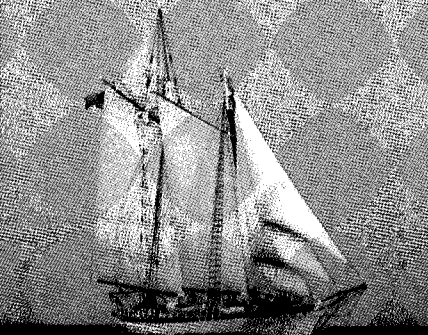
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his head—a textured, layered sound that could evoke a wide range of human emotions. To describe it in painterly terms, the standard trumpet sound was like the landscapes in an L. L. Bean catalogue—all surface and no depth. Monette was looking for a sound that was exposed and vulnerable. Rembrandt, or Van Gogh. He was certain that something was wrong with the way trumpets played, and he was determined to change it. But how?

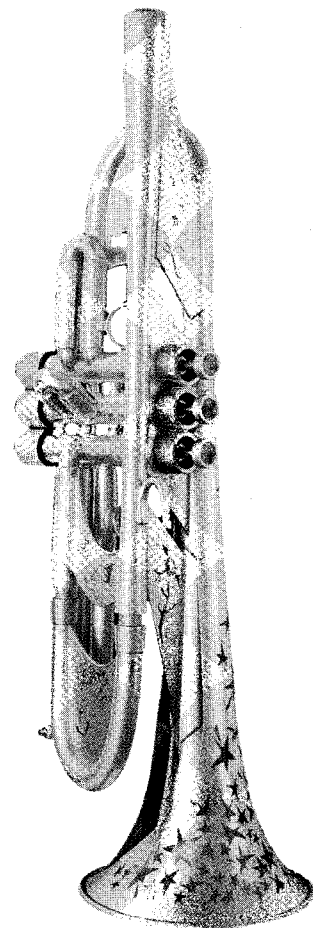
While he pondered this question, the band traveled the Midwest, playing clubs in East Lansing and Grand Rapids, Michigan; in Palatine, Illinois; in Madison, Wisconsin. The touring was entertaining but unfulfilling, and when Monette, at the age of nineteen, fell in love, he quit music. For a year and a half he did “nothing musical,” supporting himself by working as a custodian at a JCPenney department store in Milwaukee, where he lived in the same apartment building that had housed Charlie Schlueter more than ten years before, when Schlueter was just beginning his symphonic career, with that city’s orchestra. Then one day Monette was asked to deliver a package for Penney to a local music shop, where he soon found himself in a long conversation with the owner about instruments. That conversation, he says, inspired him to enroll as an apprentice at the Allied Music School, an instrument-repair school in Elkhorn, Wisconsin.

By the time he moved to Elkhorn, Monette was so frustrated by instrumental limitations of tone and timbre that he was nurturing a “crazy dream.” He would learn how to make instruments and then build them himself. Most trumpets on the market were—and still are—mass-produced, but that was a symptom rather than the source of what Monette perceived as the basic problem. He wanted a response from a trumpet, a “complete-ness of sound,” that he couldn’t find.

Almost a year later John Dulaney, who had a shop in Salem, Oregon, hired Monette to repair instruments. After moving to Salem, Monette started hanging out at the local symphony orchestra. He went to concerts not only to listen to the music but also to learn to hear the difference between, say, a cello in the high register and a viola in the low. His sense of pitch and timbre is extraordinary. When testing finished instruments in his shop, for example, he never resorts to sophisticated electronic equipment or computer analysis.

All his judgments about sound are based on his ear.

Monette worked at Dulaney’s Wills Music Store for two years, and during that time he became friends with the Oregon Symphony’s principal trumpet player, Fred Sautter, who shared Monette’s



Above: Marsalis's Presentation Monette Nirvikalpa Samadhi, decorated with jewels and icons symbolizing his career. Opposite: the popular Ajna H C and B-flat

fascination with trumpet design. Sautter saw Monette as a “revolutionary,” and began to tell his trumpet-playing friends about him. Soon players from all over the country were sending their instruments to Monette to be repaired. The backlog of work at the Wills shop was many months’ worth.

Monette’s next break came in 1981, when he was invited to visit the Los Angeles home of the *Tonight Show* bandleader and trumpeter Doc Severinsen. Monette listened to Severinsen play every one of the many instruments he owned,

PHOTOGRAPHS THIS AND FACING PAGE: JOSEPH DEISS

and suggested improvements in them. Severinsen was impressed by Monette's honesty and certainty—some might call it brazenness. He introduced Monette to an executive at the company whose trumpets Severinsen endorsed, C. G. Conn, of Elkhart, Indiana (then the largest manufacturer of brass instruments in the country).

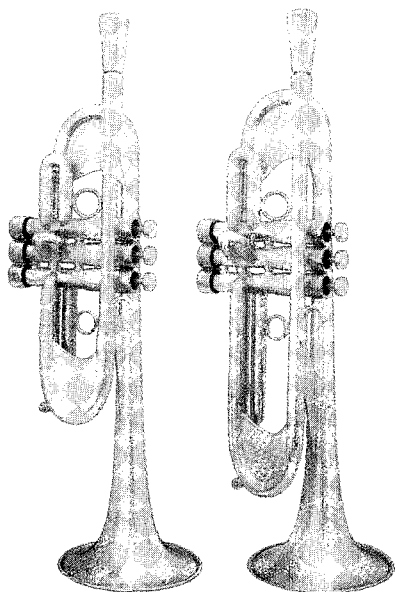
Conn hired Monette as a consultant, but Monette didn't take to what he regarded as a rigid corporate atmosphere. However, Conn liked his leadpipe design so much that the company bought it for \$15,000, a huge sum of money for Monette at that time. By then he had already opened his own custom brass shop, in the basement of a rented house in Bloomington, Indiana. Soon he made a call to another of the country's most famous symphonic players, Adolph Herseth, the principal trumpet of the Chicago Symphony. Herseth and Schlueter each ordered one of his trumpets, and Monette never again worked for someone else.

AFTER a trumpeter has learned the requisites of playing (scales, fingering, tonguing, intervals, dynamics), he needs the horn to do what he asks it to. No musician wants to strain—especially in the instrument's high register, where it is easy for a player to go for one note and hit another, because the spacings for the intervals in this range are so close. Just a slight change in the pressure of the air a player is pushing through a trumpet's tubing will change the pitch by as much as a whole step, causing a "train wreck." On a stringed instrument, such as the violin, a mistake in fingering would result in a considerably smaller change in pitch—it might be so little that no one else would even hear it.

Like all musical instruments, the trumpet is a form. Monette worked to master the form, which is a long piece of tubing, with valves that can alter the length of the

tubing through which air passes on its way from a mouthpiece to a bell. The standard orchestral trumpet pitched to C uses nearly four feet of tubing, and the mouthpiece both adds length and acts as a kind of microphone, capturing the vibrations of a player's lips. The vibrations set up a sequence of frequencies within the instrument, and it is those frequencies that make the trumpet sound like a trumpet instead of a trombone or a tuba.

For more than a century most companies mass-producing brass instruments had made only superficial changes in their mouthpieces, even though the musical pitch for the standard trumpet had evolved from A to B-flat. So players were essentially using mouthpieces for A trumpets on B-flat instruments, which added to the difficulty of playing them properly. Basing his work in part on the acoustical studies of the late Arthur Benade, Dave Monette through years of trial and error made several discoveries that helped to solve an old problem in trumpet playing: how to keep the pitch of the instrument steady over the full harmonic and dynamic range. Historically, players have always accomplished this through difficult physical adjustments of lip angle and pressure. Instead of focusing on the connection between



the mouthpiece rim and a player's lips, Monette manipulated combinations of design elements—cup shape and size, backbore (the opening at the end of a mouthpiece that connects to a trumpet's leadpipe) shape and size, weight, thickness, length, and ratio of cup volume to backbore volume. Incorporating his refinements on these elements into his increasingly sophisticated trumpets, which eventually had such features as recessed valves, O-rings, and oversized bells, Monette began making instruments on which a player could, without the usual exertion, produce a sound both dark and brilliant that remained centered on the

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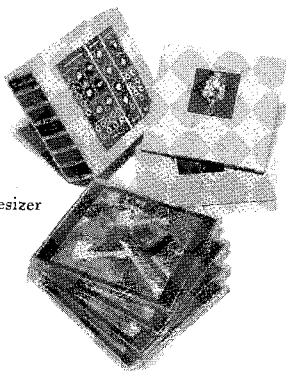
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pitch of every note. At last no one else in the orchestra could complain that the trumpets were out of tune.

Despite a popular misconception, the hardest notes to play musically on the trumpet aren't the high, loud ones. Low—down around middle C and lower—is the most difficult part of the register. It's not easy to get a tone down there that someone will want to listen to, especially playing soft. As you lessen the flow of air through the horn in an effort to play soft, the sound will sometimes just disappear, right in the middle of a note. This may be acceptable in jazz but is definitely not what you want when you're playing, for example, the Hindemith Sonata for Trumpet, one of the rare solo works for trumpet that is performed with any regularity. On conventional trumpets players may lose intonation when striving to play soft; with a properly fitted Monette horn they can barely breathe into the instrument and still produce a beautiful sound.

It's rare to hear brass players talk about the sound their instruments produce with the same passion that animates such conversations among violinists. "I knew when I met him he'd be making good horns," says Marsalis, who has been playing a Monette trumpet for more than ten years. Other well-known Monette trumpeters are effusive in their acclaim. The jazz legend Art Farmer, for whom Monette created a cross between a trumpet and a flugelhorn which he calls a "flumpet," says his new horn was "like a miracle." Not everyone who plays a Monette horn is a professional musician. Richard Abate, of New Jersey, is a graphic artist. Other Monette converts include doctors, lawyers, and at least one architect. When Abate first tried a Monette horn, he recalls, he found it "strange." But he soon adapted. "They're thick, so they don't radiate at you," he says. "They're easier to play. The response is great."

The odd vocabulary that Abate and others use to describe what Monette has done with his instruments is another indication of how unusual they are. When Abate says that Monette's horns don't "radiate," for example, he means the sound projects out to the audience, not to the player. John Raschella, the third trumpet of the Syracuse Symphony Orchestra, remembers the first time he picked up a Monette horn: "It had that rub in it," he says, referring to the way the instrument locked into pitch. "You're going to get compliments from

the string section," Raschella recalls Monette's telling him when he first started playing a Monette horn. By that, Raschella explains, Monette meant the strings wouldn't insist that the trumpets, usually just a few chairs in back of them, sounded too loud or too bright.

EACH of the small group of people who work in Monette's cavernous concrete shop is loyal not only to Monette himself but to what he is trying to do. "Quality control means a grade of either A or F," says Dean Comley, who specializes in making mouthpieces. "Gradually the criteria for an A are getting higher and higher."

To build a trumpet, first you need to assemble the materials, which include valve casings, pistons, and the balusters that fit at the top of the valves. You also need a wide variety of tubes and pieces of sheet brass and mouthpiece blanks. Then you select the tubes to start with, and you cut them on lathes, piece by piece, making the guts of the trumpet.

HAL ORINGER



The trumpet maker David Monette with a caliper and one of his custom-built horns. The current waiting period for a Monette trumpet is more than six months

The hardest part to make is the bell, which you shape by spinning on a lathe a piece of sheet brass that has been heated and then cooled. Monette used to make all the bells himself, but Dan Haswell, who has been with the shop the longest, has mastered the art after a costly trial-and-error period (a bell with an imperfection must be scrapped).

Every Monette trumpet is custom-

made for a particular player. A properly fitted Monette horn will typically be easier to play than a mass-produced instrument, will produce a fuller, more resonant sound, and will retain its pitch center at all levels of the dynamic and harmonic spectra. In the trumpets that Monette's shop builds for Charlie Schlueter, an intentional inefficiency has been factored into the ratio of bore sizes within the trumpet's mouthpiece and tubing, because Schlueter's lung capacity is so large that he might overblow conventional instruments. An amateur player picking up a Schlueter Monette would have difficulty making a note sound good; for him or her Monette would design an instrument that required less strength to play. So distinctive are the variations in design that many of the mouthpieces manufactured in Monette's shop are labeled simply "Marsalis," for example, or "Ferguson" (for Maynard Ferguson, who at the age of seventy still hits notes more than an octave above the staff).

Most Monette horns are heavier than other trumpets, and some feature a double bell. The top-of-the-line Presentation Monette Nirvikalpa Samadhi is decorated by the goldsmith Tami Dean with saw-pierced icon decorations in the bell and body of the instrument and inlaid precious and semiprecious stones on the finger buttons. As few as four or five horns a month may be manufactured. Gross company revenues have been growing as sales of mouthpieces (at \$195 each) have grown, but they are still under \$1 million a year. Nevertheless, demand is so

high that other companies have started copying Monette's innovations, right down to details of appearance. For several years Monette horns were delivered in raw brass, whereas assembly-line trumpets were highly polished. But now you can go into many instrument shops and find mass-market horns without a finish, whereas some of Monette's are gold-plated. The second bell and the posts that support it—which characterize Monette's so-called Raja Samadhi line—have also been duplicated.

Monette stays in touch with the people who play his horns. At the shop they are referred to as clients, not customers;

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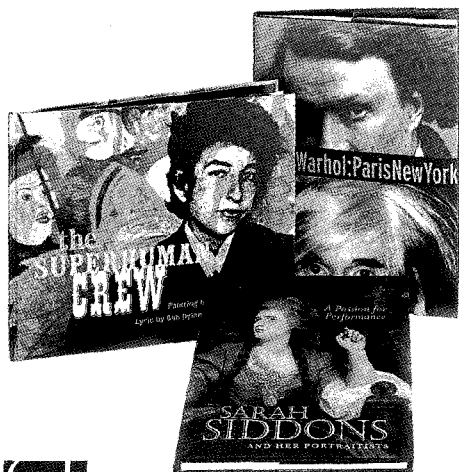
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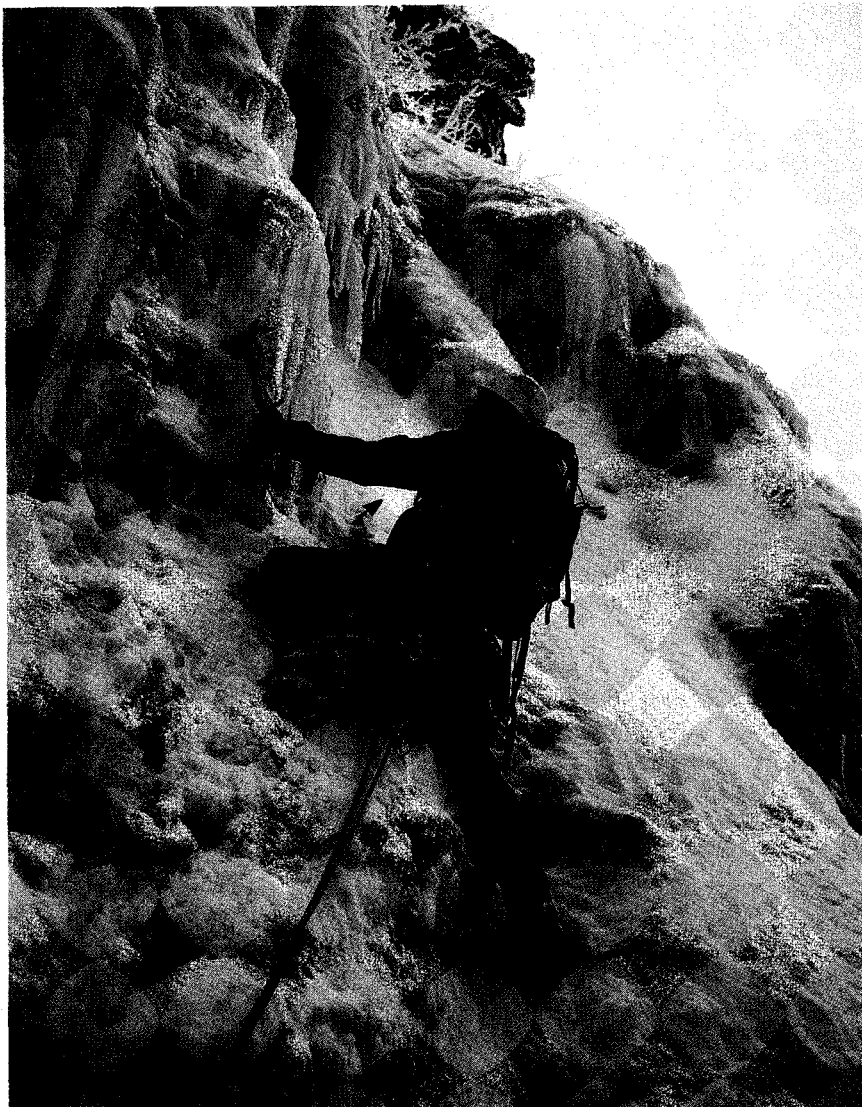
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Monette calls most of them friends. He will fly cross-country just to hear one of those friends play. He has been in New York for the premiere of every Marsalis commission, including the Pulitzer Prize-winning oratorio *Blood on the Fields*. One of his many overseas trips took him to Finland, where most of the trumpet section of the Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra uses Monette equipment. And he goes to Boston or Tanglewood at least once a year when Charlie Schlueter has an important solo.

Modest about the skilled craftsmanship of his work, Monette is inscrutable about the source of his creativity. His work, he says, is ultimately about music, not sound production. His search for a perfect trumpet sound, he insists, is really an effort to make a horn that "gets out of the way" of the mysterious connection that music makes between a player and an audience. One of Monette's closest friends has defined the source of Monette's art as a longing for something in his life that is gone and cannot be brought back. Whatever the explanation, Monette responds empathetically when a musician communicates an emotion to him. Monette's favorite popular tune is Gershwin's "Embraceable You," which Marsalis invariably plays when he knows that Monette is in the audience. During a performance by one of his friends Monette listens so carefully that he can seem transported onto the stage. A few seasons ago, at a BSO performance of Mahler's Third Symphony, during which Schlueter played the famous offstage post-horn solo on a Monette flumpet, Monette sat perfectly still for more than an hour, eyes closed, hands with palms open on his thighs, listening with an intensity that mimed the music's.

Afterward the Boston audience, which is often staid, paid tribute to the players with vociferous applause. But Monette remained in his seat, in a kind of trance. Finally he opened his eyes and smiled. "Damn," he said quietly, recalling the plaintive trumpet solo that introduces the symphony's last theme. He stood and stared at the chair vacated by Schlueter, who had been able to play that theme pianissimo without seeming to hold anything back. The result was a highly emotive sound that filled the hall without being loud.

"How does he do that?" Monette asked, shaking his head. ☞



TYLER STABLEFORD

On Cannon Cliff

A tutorial at a classic site with one of America's pre-eminent alpine climbers

ON a late-winter morning John Bouchard starts up the steep snow slope at the base of a 600-foot-high gully of ice and rock known to climbers as the Black Dike.

The gully splits the broad granite face of New Hampshire's Cannon Cliff like a hatchet wound. It is thirty degrees and

nearly windless; a fine, dry snow falls through the dense fog that conceals the summit. In its present wintry aspect the cliff—which is nearly a mile wide, a thousand feet high, and an average of ten degrees off vertical—could easily be mistaken for the base of a north wall somewhere in the Alps.

by **Andrew Todhunter**

From the foot of the Dike a talus field descends into beech trees. Farther lies a two-lane road. Half a mile away Bouchard's truck stands alone in a parking lot.

Bouchard, a forty-six-year-old alpinist from neighboring North Conway, New Hampshire, is shod in neon-yellow plastic boots. Steel crampons are secured to the boots' soles, their points freshly sharpened with a hand file. In each gloved hand he carries a short-shafted ice ax. Bouchard knows the route well; in 1971, then an unknown teenager with two years' experience, he was the first person to climb it. The year before, Yvon Chouinard, the godfather of American ice climbing, had proclaimed the unclimbed gully "the last great plum in the East," believing that it lay beyond the technical standards of the day. The Dike was quickly acknowledged as the country's most challenging line on ice, and the details of Bouchard's first ascent—he did it solo, broke an ice ax, lost a glove, and finished at night in a storm—established his reputation as one of the country's pre-eminent ice climbers. Nearly thirty years after the first ascent the Black Dike is still widely considered to be the finest alpine climb in New England.

Bouchard went on to complete a number of landmark climbs in the Alps and elsewhere, including the first ascent of the North Couloir, on the north face of the Grand Charmoz, in Chamonix, France, in 1975. In 1981 he and a partner, Mark Richey, climbed the north face of Switzerland's Eiger in fifteen hours, then the second-fastest ascent ever. Bouchard abandoned climbing for paragliding in 1987, and spent six years competing and designing paragliders. The No. 1-ranked U.S. paraglider pilot in 1990 and 1991, he returned to climbing full time in 1993. In 1996 Bouchard and Richey made a successful second ascent, in six days, of the East Pillar of India's Shivling peak. (Not a single attempt on that high-altitude route had succeeded since an epic twelve-day first ascent in 1981.) They trained for the climb in winter on Cannon Cliff.

On Cannon, Bouchard says, an alpinist

Under the chilly gaze of the Old Man of the Mountain, in New Hampshire's Franconia Notch, a climber negotiates a route on Cannon Cliff

in training can find routes as challenging as—albeit much shorter than—anything to be found on the world's most notorious faces: Patagonia's Cerro Torre, for example, or Shivering's East Pillar. "Cannon has everything except altitude," Bouchard claims. "You can practice on snowed-up rock in crampons, mixed ice and rock, and technical rock climbing, all on a single route in varying conditions."

Cannon Cliff is feared for instability and rock fall. Four climbers have been killed on its face. Mount Washington, an hour to the northeast, is called the most dangerous small mountain in the world, owing largely to freezing temperatures, blistering winds (231-mile-per-hour gusts have been clocked at the summit—the highest winds recorded anywhere in the world at a fixed location), and the threat of avalanche. For high-altitude climbers in training, the winter conditions on Washington, Cannon, and other regional crags are ideal. "If you train in bad conditions," Bouchard explains, "you're less surprised when they hit at higher altitudes."

I have asked Bouchard to put me through a three-day training program covering the vertical-ice and alpine techniques used on high-altitude walls. We plan to ascend a number of classic alpine winter routes—commonly a mixture of ice, snow, and rock. Because it is late winter, we are prepared to encounter what Scottish climbers happily embrace as "full conditions": bad weather.

UP on the Black Dike, Bouchard quickly comes to the end of the first pitch, or rope length—generally in the neighborhood of 150 feet—and sets a belay anchor. At this stage the climbing is straightforward, and I have soon joined him on a ledge at the base of the route's crux, or most difficult section—a short rock buttress bare of ice.

Bouchard leaves the safety of the ledge and scrapes out across the rock in his crampons. I belay, feeding the rope through a device affixed to my harness as he proceeds. He slowly spirals up and out around the buttress toward a section of snow and ice, perching the points of his crampons on small ledges, grasping knobs of rock with ungloved hands. For the moment his ice tools rest in holsters at his waist. He pauses, clips his rope into a piton, and climbs on.

He is less than eight feet from me when a rock the size of a toolbox comes loose in

his hand. The rock misses his boot by inches and skips down the gully. Luckily, we are alone on the route. Unbalanced by the falling rock, Bouchard teeters for a moment on his crampons and then plunges from the face.

It is a short fall, easily belayed, but it surprises me. Bouchard is one of the world's most experienced alpinists, at home on a route he pioneered, a climb he has frequently made unroped. It is easy to forget that he might actually rely on my belay.

"There is an element of randomness that you can't control," Bouchard says later of such alpine routes. "But part of the pleasure is knowing that you're willing to take that chance. It's very different from the risks taken by the Everest crowd, or by bungee jumpers. The risks on Everest are high but totally out of the climber's control—the actual climbing takes very little skill. Bungee jumping is the reverse—nothing can go wrong if you do it right."

The bare-rock crux notwithstanding, most of the Black Dike is sheathed in ice—tinted ochre by minerals in the groundwater—and offers challenges well suited to the intermediate ice climber. (Like rock climbing, ice climbing has seen a tremendous boom in participation in recent years. In 1980, Bouchard estimates, there may have been 1,500 regular ice climbers in the United States. At this writing the figure stands above 10,000.) Hooking and swinging with our tools, toe-kicking up narrow chimneys, or vertical slots, of ice, we finish the route without further incident.

When I top out into the trees at the end of the climb, I shake Bouchard's hand and congratulate him. We hike off through the snow along a trail on the back of the cliff and drive to a neighboring village for lunch. I am elated from the climb, but Bouchard is pensive, and the conversation soon turns to mortality.

IN 1978 the French book *Les Grands de la montagne* listed the young John Bouchard among the most promising alpinists of his generation. During my visit, while thumbing through his copy of the book, I come across this list, which named nine climbers from three nations. Five of the names are marked with simple crosses, inscribed in pen over the years.

"The first time I helped carry a body off a mountain, it was tough," he says.

"After that it didn't really bother me. I never had a friend die with me on a climb. They just went away on expeditions and never came back."

In the summer of 1994 Bouchard attended a dinner party in Chamonix. It was a reunion of sorts, and the climbers, all in their forties or early fifties, sat around a long table on a porch across a valley from the Chamonix Aiguilles and spoke of the dead. Of Bouchard's original circle—some fifteen British, French, and American climbers who had gotten their start together in the Alps in the early 1970s and had become friends—about half had been killed in the mountains. In some cases people at the party had been climbing with them when the accidents occurred. In every case they were killed by what climbers call "objective dangers"—hazards largely or entirely outside their control. World-class alpinists all, they were lost to high-altitude exhaustion, collapsing séracs, avalanches, crevasses. One of them, on Annapurna, looked up at the wrong moment and was struck in the face by a rock the size of a volleyball. Some of the survivors had not seen one another since the accidents, and as the evening wore on, the dead climbers became almost palpable.

Bouchard has climbed as hard as any of his peers (and his six-year sabbatical in paragliding was a good deal more dangerous, statistically speaking, than alpinism). He broke an ankle once, high on Cannon, and finished the climb. Later he was struck by lightning, near the summit of the Walker Spur on the Grandes Jorasses, along the French-Italian border near Chamonix. High on the Gervasutti Pillar, in the Alps, he was once caught in a hail of falling rocks. For half a minute blocks from the size of mailboxes to the size of refrigerators tumbled down the face in a dense cloud of dust. Without cover, Bouchard had no choice but to lower his head and wait. When it ended, a climber in another party—ten feet from Bouchard—was dead. Bouchard and his partner were unscathed.

Bouchard speaks of the professional pressure to push limits. "You become very, very competitive," he explains. "As a climber, a first ascent is your work. And like an artist, you need to produce."

A National Merit Scholar in high school, Bouchard went on to earn a degree in medieval studies from the University of Vermont. "In college I was fasci-

nated by the Crusades, by the Knights Templar," he says. "I felt that I had been given a calling—that I was put here to climb. I had the sense when I was climbing of fulfilling a greater obligation." Raised as a Roman Catholic, Bouchard prays before significant climbs. He says he has experienced something like a state of grace on long, difficult routes, among them his solo first ascent of the Grand Chamois. Although some of his peers aggressively deny the role of faith or superstition in climbing, Bouchard has found that most alpinists—novices and experts alike—carry talismans of one kind or another, and are willing to participate in impromptu religious ceremonies at the start of expeditions. These observances are often a combination of local custom and various Western prayers.

THE following day finds us scratching our way up the mixed ice, snow, and rock of a route called Wiessner's Direct. I have little experience on mixed terrain, and the climbing rapidly becomes more desperate as we proceed. We are not climbing, as alpinists are often forced to do, through subzero temperatures and heavy snow. But it is inarguably winter, and cold. Because many of the moves we make require standard rock-climbing holds, we climb ungloved, our ice tools often holstered. The knobs and ledges of rock are sometimes dusted or even blanketed with snow that must be brushed away with bare fingertips. While trying to attain the foot of a steep triangular snowfield, I have no choice but to plunge a blue hand deep into the surface powder and cling to the crusted snow beneath. In other sections, following Bouchard's unhurried example, I experiment with my tools. There is ice on the route, and ice requires crampons, but because much of the rock is bare, much of the climbing is dry-tooling—hooking and wedging the picks and heads of the ice tools in rocky cracks, perching our crampon points on granite ledges sometimes no wider than a thumbnail clipping. Some of the slabs and holds are glazed with ice, too slick for a grasping hand and too thin to support a pick or crampons. Such terrain is often unclimbable, and alpinists must seek another way.

Here and there, tucked in cracks, sturdy tongues of ice allow reliable crampon and tool placements. Then we're off onto rock and snow again, mixing holds, paus-

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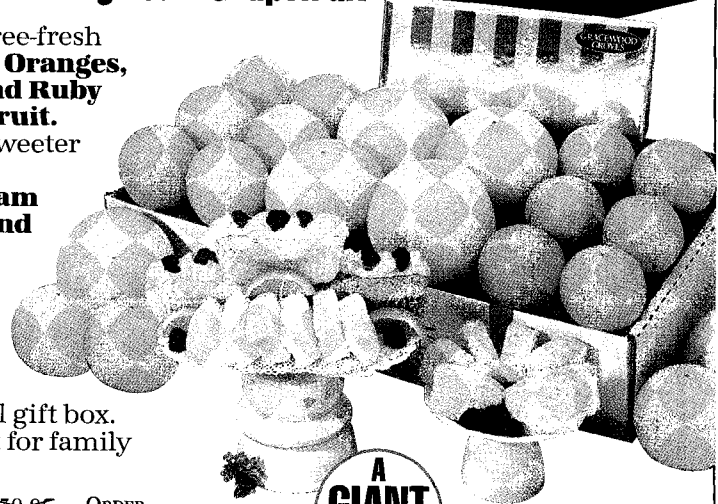
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ing to consider choices. Deliberate or intuitive, there is puzzle-solving—move by move—in all technical climbing; the variables only increase on mixed terrain.

Near the conclusion of the third pitch, as I hang from my ice tools, their heads stacked above my head in a tapering vertical crack, it occurs to me that my adze—a bowed crescent of steel sharp enough to peel a potato and designed to clear hard ice from a potential anchor position—is perfectly poised, should the placement “pop” suddenly under my weight, to strike me in the face. As I prepare to move up with my crampons, I consider this possibility aloud. “It happens all the time,” Bouchard remarks offhandedly from his

belay position. “A partner of mine had an adze go through the bridge of his nose. It shattered his eye orbit and nearly blinded him.”

“Thanks,” I tell him, easing up to a higher position on my crampons, out of the weapon’s way.

Bouchard wears a canary-yellow climbing jacket. Waterproof, streamlined, devoid of straps, buckles, and extra zippers, it is his latest design for Wild Things, a company he founded in 1981 in North Conway with Marie Meunier, also a climber and then his wife.

“The best climbing gear looks too simple to be appealing to many non-experts,” Bouchard said earlier, in the parking lot.

“Many of the bigger companies manufacture equipment and clothing that has the climbing look but is actually too heavy and impractical for technical climbing. One company makes a suit covered with gear clips and extra pockets and double zippers. It sells, because it looks hardcore and nonprofessionals don’t know better. But no serious climbers I know would ever wear it.”

He gestures at my shell, an industry classic that many climbers swear by. “That jacket’s heavier than it needs to be. You take a climber’s equipment: clothes, boots, tools, hardware. Unless you’re manic about weight, it really adds up. A few extra ounces here, a couple there. It’s invisible, but pretty soon you’re carrying ten or fifteen extra pounds. On a long climb even three extra pounds can kill you.” Bouchard then quotes Antoine de Saint-Exupéry on aircraft design: “Perfection is finally attained not when there is no longer anything to add but when there is no longer anything to take away.”

HIGH on Wiessner’s Direct, Bouchard sets out across a broad, featureless granite slab, headed for a crack at the foot of an overhanging wall. He has twenty-five feet to travel, and in summer the slab—angled at about twenty degrees—would be as easy to traverse as a sun porch. For a climber wearing crampons, however, it becomes a different proposition. There is nothing to hold, no crack in which to secure an anchor, and as Bouchard creeps out across the stone, his knees bent slightly, the angle is just steep enough to make his crampons slide a quarter inch at every second or third step. The narrow belay ledge lies three feet below the edge of the slab. Should Bouchard fall, he will come off. There is no way, I realize, that he could stop the momentum of his fall. He will come into me, complete with crampons and ice tools, or over me if I duck below the ledge. Either way the anchor will sustain a shock.

I glance back and down the nearly vertical wall behind me. Horns of rock protrude from the main face. There is nothing beneath me that anyone would like to fall on, rope or no rope. My responsibility—at this moment the sole reason for my existence—is to make sure he falls no farther from the anchor than the length of the rope he has taken out. Conceivably, I could rope in a few feet as he rolls. Should he fall, I decide, I will duck.



PETER COLE

The gully of ice and rock called the Black Dike mounts toward the V. By today’s standards an intermediate route, it was once America’s most challenging line on ice

A crampon in the face or the belay hand, beyond its immediate discomfort, would seriously endanger the belay—with potentially fatal results. I'll drop behind the ledge, try to take in some rope, let him roll over me, and hope for the best.

I consider the anchor—two pitons hammered into a crack, knee-high—and wonder if there's any chance it could blow. Bouchard takes several creeping, precise steps, as if walking on a windowpane, and then he begins to slide. The steel points of the crampons growling on the granite, he slides an inch, two, three, and finally comes to a halt, the points catching on minute granules. He waits for a moment and then carefully steps forward again with one foot. He shifts his weight. It holds. He picks up and places his opposing foot. Step by step he inches closer to the crack and safety. Twice more he begins to slide and stops, each time proceeding a little farther. The farther away from me he gets, the more rope is out, the faster and farther he will fall on the anchor, and the more uncomfortable I become watching him. Finally he reaches the crack and gets a piece in. He clips in the rope. It's done.

For me, traversing the slab is nothing: the anchor is above me. If I slide, the rope will stop me. If I fall, I'll just get up. There, in essence, is the difference between leading and seconding.

By the end of the route—pawing with my crampons, flailing and hooking with my tools, hanging shamelessly to rest on Bouchard's belay—I've abandoned anything approaching decent form. For a climber at my level, the Black Dike was a formidable challenge. But Wiessner's Direct, at least in winter conditions, is beyond me. It doesn't help that the route's crux—a nasty granite fin and then a chimney—is the climb's conclusion. I get up it, just barely, with Bouchard reeling me in like a tarpon. Exhausted and jumpy, my nerves shot, I'm eager to get off the cliff and down to a warm bar and a meal. As Bouchard coils the rope, a fine snow falling in the dusk, he puts the climb in broader perspective: "On a big alpine wall like the Eiger you have to climb that kind of terrain over and over. Some of the pitches will be a little easier, some of them harder. But most of it will be about like that. Thirty, forty pitches. Twelve or fifteen hours a day. And then, twenty pitches up, you can always get hit by a storm." ☼

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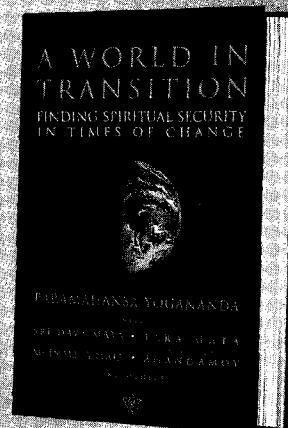
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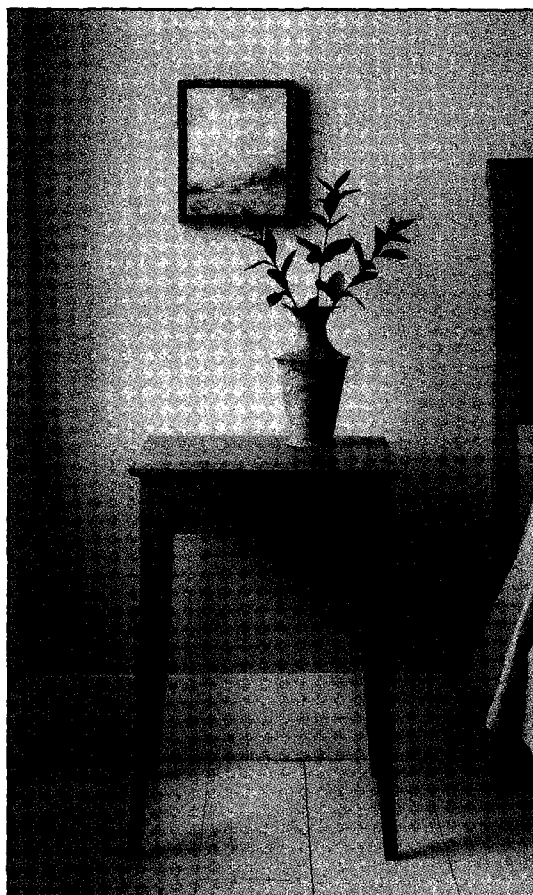
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Forgotten Heroes of Freedom

"As much as any of the Revolutionary patriots and Founding Fathers," writes our reviewer, a historian of slavery, "we need to recall these plantation rebels and outlaws"

by Leon F. Litwack

RUNAWAY SLAVES

Rebels on the Plantation

by John Hope Franklin and
Loren Schweninger.
Oxford, 455 pages, \$35.00.

FOR a country that has celebrated its uniqueness as the land of freedom and the refuge of the oppressed, and in recent decades has acclaimed the feats of "freedom fighters" around the world, the United States has done little to recognize and honor some of its native-born fighters for freedom—slave rebels and fugitives in the antebellum South who risked their lives to escape oppression. Their absence from the galaxy of American heroes is easy to explain. The nation founded on the proposition that "all men are created equal" was based on the most enormous of human inequalities, and for many decades the prevailing interpretation of slavery in our history books reflected the racial views of the slaveowners. The slave eulogized and enshrined in southern mythology was not the freedom fighter but the passive, pampered, faithful Sambo who would refuse his freedom even if offered it. ("So faithful that he volunteered for slavery," the novelist Ishmael Reid wrote mockingly in *Flight to Canada*. "The slaves voted him all-Slavery.")

For more than a century historians, social scientists, and novelists validated this image, along with pseudo-scientific theories of black degeneracy and inferiority. Generations of American students imbibed the textbook version of history taught by two eminent historians, Samuel Eliot Morison, of Harvard, and Henry Steele Commager, of Columbia, who wrote in the

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Right:
a newspaper
advertisement,
1835

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RUNAWAY from the subscriber, on the night of the 2d instant, a negro man who calls himself *Henry May*, about 22 years old, 5 feet 6 or 8 inches high, ordinary color, rather chunky built, bushy head, and has it divided mostly on one side, and keeps it very nicely combed has been raised in the house, and is a first rate dining-room servant, and was in a tavern in Louisville for 15 months. I expect he is now in Louisville, trying to make his escape to a free state, (in all probability to Cincinnati, Ohio.) He is a good cook, and is handy in any capacity as a house servant. Had on when he left, a dark cassinett coat, and dark striped cassinett pantaloons, new—he had other clothing. I will give \$50 reward if taken in Louisville 100 dollars if taken one hundred miles from Louisville in this State, and 150 dollars if taken out of this State, and delivered to me, or secured in any jail so that I can get him again.
WILLIAM BURKE.
Harrison, Ky., September 3d, 1838.

Left:
A warning distributed in Boston in 1851 by the abolitionist Theodore Parker (Shortly after passage of the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 a runaway slave had been forcibly returned from Boston to Georgia.)

1950 edition of *The Growth of the American Republic*, "As for Sambo, whose wrongs moved the abolitionists to wrath and tears, there is some reason to believe that he suffered less than any other class in the South from its 'peculiar institution.'" After all, most slaves "were adequately fed, well cared for, and apparently happy," they continued. "Although brought to America by force, the incurably optimistic Negro soon became attached to the country, and devoted to his 'white folks.'"

Given the beneficence of slavery, why would any sensible slave want to flee? Any slaves who did were obviously abnormal—deceived misfits who, once they reached the inhospitable North, would obey their instincts and cheerfully return to "those they loved best." Refusing to believe that slaves might flee of their own volition, aggrieved southern whites blamed outside agitators—abolitionists—for the growing numbers of misfits. (As if the white South had learned nothing from history, meddlesome Communist agitators were accused in the 1950s and 1960s of subverting an otherwise contented black population.) Physicians could offer conscience-easing comfort to whites: Samuel Cartwright, for one, diagnosed slave flight as "Drapetomania"—a disease peculiar to blacks, "as much a disease of the mind as any other species of mental alienation." It could be treated, by first watching for symptoms—a "sulky and dissatisfied" attitude—and then determining and eliminating the cause. Cartwright recommended that in the absence of any ascertainable cause, "whipping the devil out of [slaves]" was the appropriate preventive medicine.

No matter how often slaveowners boasted of their loyal "darkies," nearly every slaveowner had to contend with "troublesome property"—men and women who refused to reconcile themselves to a system of uncompensated labor that stripped them of their humanity. These "rebels" expressed their dissent by committing arson, faking illness, damaging crops and tools, and even assaulting their owners or overseers. Short of insurrection, one of the most dramatic actions slaves could take was to run away. Whether their actions were defined as "resistance" or as "intransigence," runaways constituted a persistent reminder that apologists for slavery spoke primarily for themselves.

In *Runaway Slaves: Rebels on the Plantation* the historians John Hope

Franklin and Loren Schweninger have written a methodical and deeply researched study of a group of men and women whose exploits have often been shrouded in myth or simply ignored. The number of attempted escapes remained relatively small—conservative estimates put it at about 50,000 annually, with perhaps 1,000 or 2,000 successful in reaching the North, out of a population that at its peak, in 1860, numbered almost four million—but the impact of these attempts, judging by the elaborate machinery that whites constructed to deal with the challenge to their authority and racial beliefs, was disproportionate.

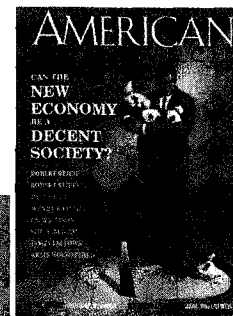
THE motives that precipitated flight are meticulously documented in *Runaway Slaves*. Some runaways kept an eye out for any chance to claim freedom. But for many flight was a response to an incident, a grievance, or a need—the most powerful, perhaps, being to reunite with loved ones. Slaves defied formidable odds to find and rejoin families broken up by sale. Those efforts did not diminish during the Civil War and in the immediate aftermath of emancipation, when husbands and wives, parents and children, brothers and sisters, sought each other out with an equal resourcefulness. Nothing, in fact, more dramatically belied popular theories about a race of moral cripples who placed little value on marital and familial ties.

The moods of even the kindest slave-owning families could vary greatly from day to day, and some slaves simply reached a point where they could no longer tolerate the sassiness, insolence, and violence of those who owned them. Nor could they accept deceit and dishonesty—as in the failure of owners to keep promises that their slaves might buy freedom. As late as the Second World War field hands in Coahoma County, Mississippi, sang this version of an old slave song:

My ole mistress promised me
Before she died she would set me free. . . .
Now she's dead and gone to hell,
I hope the devil will burn her well.

After making an extensive statistical examination of runaway slaves advertised in newspapers, Franklin and Schweninger constructed a profile. They found that the profile maintained "a remarkable consistency" even as the institution of slavery underwent significant changes.

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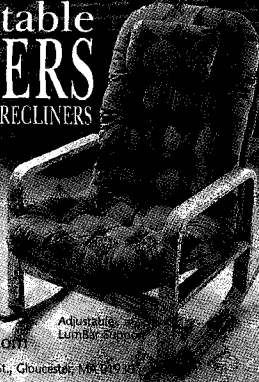
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Runaways were mostly young (three out of four in their teens and twenties) male (81 percent) field hands (only one in six was a skilled artisan or a house servant). The preponderance of males reflected the fact that female slaves had often begun to raise children by their late teens and twenties, and family escapes were exceedingly difficult. Franklin and Schweninger also discovered a consistency in personality traits and demeanor, with "most runaways" exhibiting—not surprisingly—self-confidence, determination, self-reliance, resourcefulness, and intelligence. Some of the runaways were not legally slaves at all. Rather, they were seeking to win back a freedom taken from them by overzealous "slave catchers" eager to capitalize on the vulnerability of free blacks in a slave society. A number of narratives were written by free blacks who had been kidnapped off the streets of northern cities and transported to slave markets.

The formidable legend of the Underground Railroad (in which thousands of slaves reached the North with the help of Quaker and abolitionist "conductors") notwithstanding, successful fugitives depended mostly on their own resources. By the time most runaways made contact with abolitionists, often by chance, they had already completed the most perilous part of the journey. Very few, however, succeeded in reaching the Promised Land. To escape from the Deep South was nearly impossible: the distances to be traversed were too great, the people too hostile, and the geography unfamiliar. Many runaways had never been away from the farms or plantations on which they were born and worked, and if they were to succeed, they would have to travel by night.

Most runaways, Franklin and Schweninger conclude, actually remained in their immediate neighborhoods for various periods of time. Many stayed away for a few days and then returned on their own (often after visiting loved ones on neighboring plantations). Many were quickly tracked down, and still others took to "lying out" with other runaways—encamped along rivers and streams or in caves, dense forests, or swampy areas—and sustaining themselves through a clandestine economy based on stolen goods. Whereas a few runaways remained at large for years in the vicinity of their owners, others boldly sought to negotiate terms of work and life that would ensure their return and future labor—labor so valuable that in some cas-

es owners actually agreed to negotiate. Many runaways fled to the nearest town or city, hoping to elude their pursuers by vanishing into black neighborhoods.

The published narratives of runaway slaves often reveal spectacular escapes. Henry Brown, of Virginia, for example, had a friend ship him in a wooden crate to Philadelphia, where he was delivered to the office of the local anti-slavery society—alive and free. This story finds no place in *Runaway Slaves*, but it underscores by exception the point made by Franklin and Schweninger: "For most, the anonymity they achieved was ephemeral. . . . The great majority of runaways left neither dramatically nor in the end successfully." Escape usually ended in detection, arrest, imprisonment, a return to the owners, certain and often brutal punishment, and, sometimes, immediate sale. In addition to advertising in newspapers, owners employed trained "negro dogs," mercenary "negro catchers," vigilance committees, militias, local, state, and federal officials, and the entire judicial and police system (lawyers, sheriffs, constables, jailers, justices of the peace, and judges). The much-feared slave patrols ("patterolers"), often made up of local nonslaveholding whites, occupied a pivotal place in black folklore.

Run, nigger, run, patteroler'll
ketch yer,

Hit yer thirty-nine and sware'
e didn' tech yer.

Runaways did not accept capture easily. If cornered, they often resisted, returning blow for blow, and sometimes they prevailed. If captured, they might refuse to divulge their owners' names, choosing instead to die in vermin-ridden "slave pens." Organized bands of runaways evoked fears of slave insurrection; reports or rumors of pillaging and looting could bring terror to entire communities.

As Franklin and Schweninger suggest, the runaway placed the entire system of slavery on trial, and "it was a rare owner, large or small, who could boast that he had never had a slave abscond from his farm or plantation." The punishments for runaways—often "fiendish," as the authors say, and sometimes fatal—were meant to impress upon the entire slave community the futility of any effort to achieve freedom. The scars and disfigurement suffered by slaves at the hands of their owners or overseers—de-

scribed in meticulous detail in advertisements—testified to the often uncontrollable rage of men who considered themselves compassionate, God-fearing masters unable to contain the rebels.

Although they recognized the odds against them and the punishments they faced, and were uncertain what fate awaited them even if they succeeded, many men and women persisted in their quest for a life out of bondage. Despite the Fugitive Slave Acts and other harsh laws, the flow of runaways increased in the 1840s and 1850s, along with violent resistance to capture. Advertisements and petitions abounded with references to runaways as "headstrong," "obdurate," "intractable," "impudent," "malicious," "rebellious," "uncontrollable," "unmanageable," and "ungovernable." In the records kept by slaveowners accusations of betrayal and ingratitude accompanied the news that a once "faithful & excellent & capable Servant" or a slave esteemed as one of the "family" had fled "without any cause," "without provocation," or "without any unjust or injurious treatment." One plantation mistress simply could not comprehend the loss of a servant "so honest, so faithful, so truthful, so devoted to my interests that I trusted everything to her." Runaways taught masters and mistresses that they had mistaken outward demeanor for inner feelings, docility for contentment, and deference and accommodation for submission. That revelation would return to haunt former slaveowners during and after the Civil War, when those they had once claimed as property became *unrecognizable men and women*.

FRANKLIN and Schweninger have largely ignored autobiographical narratives and oral histories, choosing to rely instead on documents that other scholars have not fully utilized: notices of runaways in newspapers, broadsides, and handbills; petitions to southern legislatures and county courts; and other legal and judicial records. These sources, they explain, enhance the credibility of their study: advertisers and petitioners seeking the apprehension of runaways had an investment in providing accurate and candid information.

But heavily relying on these sources, albeit explicable on scholarly grounds, limits our view of the world of runaway slaves. Seldom do we hear in this book the words and thoughts contained in the

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many reminiscences and autobiographies that have withstood previous critical scrutiny. Seldom are we exposed to folklore that grew up around runaways—the songs, stories, and legends passed from generation to generation, which occupy such a prominent place in black cultural memory. Tales of how runaways eluded or bested their pursuers did wonders for black pride and helped to give black Americans a history. Being able to draw on this rich, expressive record would enable readers to appreciate more fully the lives and emotions of the men and women who occupy center stage in this book. The stories told by Henry Bibb, Henry Brown, William Wells Brown, William and Ellen Craft, Frederick Douglass, Harriet Jacobs, Jermain Loguen, and Austin Steward, among others, of why and how they fled, how they perceived their chances, how they viewed their owners, what strategies they employed, what thoughts sustained them, and what happened to them in freedom would have given this important work much-needed soul.

What Franklin and Schweninger have achieved nonetheless remains impressive. No other study has documented as fully the identities of runaway slaves and the control they challenged and sometimes eluded. *Runaway Slaves* affords an intimate and devastating examination of slavery—of the people who managed it and the people who defied it, and the lengths to which they would go to preserve their property or to secure their freedom. The study underscores the extraordinary amount of attention, energy, and legislation expended on keeping black people in their place. Few readers of this book will be able to subscribe to the notion of slaves as acquiescent partners in their subjugation.

The obsession with racial control never really diminished, and in the view of Henry M. Turner, a black clergyman at the end of the nineteenth century, nothing more compellingly refuted the charge of inferiority: "More laws have been enacted by the different legislatures of the country," he wrote, "and more judicial decisions have been delivered and proclaimed against this piece of inferiority called negro than have been issued against any people since time began." Given the attempts to suppress and control his race, Turner concluded, "it would appear that the negro is the greatest man on earth."

Runaways did not bring down slavery,

though the issues they raised and the problems they created helped to bring on the war that would destroy slavery. By their very presence and persistence they testified to the resilience of the human spirit in a nation whose Constitution and laws sanctioned slave catchers. As much as any of the Revolutionary patriots and Founding Fathers, we need to recall these plantation rebels and outlaws—mostly unsung in their own time—who individually or collectively tried, in the face of overwhelming odds, to give meaning to abstract notions of independence and freedom. In *Runaway Slaves*, John Hope Franklin and Loren Schweninger help to redeem the rightful place of these men and women in the historic struggle for justice and human dignity, even as this nation continues to come to grips with the consequences of its contradictory legacies of liberty and slavery, freedom and repression. ♣

Phony Science Wars

by Richard Rorty

THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF WHAT?

by Ian Hacking.
Harvard University Press,
261 pages, \$29.95.

OCCASIONALLY we read about a war that is supposed to be going on among philosophers. The war, we are told, is between those who believe in truth and rationality and those who do not. The latter—the bad guys—are sometimes called postmodernists, sometimes irrationalists and relativists, and sometimes social constructionists. The good guys believe that science tells us the way things really are; they take the paradigm of rationality to be scientific inquiry, just as the paradigm of truth is the result of that inquiry.

Good guys such as E. O. Wilson and Paul Gross ask us to see natural science as a model for other human activities. They are deeply suspicious of philosophers of science (including Bruno Latour

and the late Thomas Kuhn) who describe conflicts between scientific theories in the same terms they use to describe conflicts between moral or political opinions. Wilson and Gross see a big difference between finding and making—between efforts to learn how things really are and efforts to cobble together artificial entities such as commercial credit and constitutional democracy. Their insistence that natural science enjoys a special relationship to reality has been even more vociferous since the "Sokal hoax," a few years ago, when a scientist named Alan Sokal made fools of some postmodernist non-scientists by getting them to take a rubbishy bit of pseudo-science seriously.

Bad guys, like the people Sokal fooled, think that "postmodern philosophy"—roughly, the anti-metaphysical doctrines common to Nietzsche, Foucault, Heidegger, and Derrida—has "unmasked" science. Starting with the claim that homosexuality, the Negro race, and womanliness are social constructions, they go on to suggest that quarks and genes probably are too. "Ideology" and "power," they say, have infiltrated sterile laboratories and lurk between the lines of arcane journals of mathematical physics. The very idea of scientific objectivity, they say, is self-deceptive and fraudulent.

Members of a third group find themselves caught in the middle, agreeing that we might be better off without the term "objective reality" but thinking, too, that we could do without "social construction." They believe neither that science has a special relationship to reality nor that its pretensions need to be unmasked. The community of natural scientists is, they think, a model of intellectual rectitude, and yet its virtues—willingness to hear the other side, to think through the issues, to examine the evidence—have nothing to do with the fact that the objects natural scientists investigate are found rather than made. The same virtues, after all, are found among judges and classical philologists, who investigate objects that are made rather than found.

These philosophers can agree with the social constructionists that notions like "the homosexual" and "the Negro" and "the female" are best seen not as inevitable classifications of human beings but rather as inventions that have done more harm than good. But they are not sure that "X is a social construction" adds much to "talking about X is not inevitable,

and there are probably better ways of talking." They see the point of Foucault's famous observation that in the nineteenth century homosexuality was "transposed from the practice of sodomy onto a kind of interior androgyny, a hermaphroditism of the soul." Foucault went on to say, "The sodomite had been a temporary aberration; the homosexual was now a species." They agree that we would have been better off with the commonsensical thought that some men prefer to have sex with other men than with the sophisticated attempt to ground this preference in a deep, dark psychopathology. But they think that the energy Foucault's disciples have put into arguing that something is a social construction would be better put into proposing some alternative social construction: a more effective and less damaging way of talking about what is going on. All our controversial ways of talking are, to be sure, choices that society has made about how to classify things. In that sense these classifications are of course socially constructed. But the interesting question is whether anybody can suggest a better classification.

IAN Hacking—the most intellectually curious and imaginative philosopher of science now writing—is a member of the third group. In this spirited and eminently readable book he suggests that the combatants climb down from the level of abstraction on which they debate such topics as the nature of truth, the nature of science, and the nature of rationality, and focus instead on three questions: Are the best scientific theories of our day the inevitable results of serious inquiry, or might science have taken a different turn and still had equal success in building bombs, say, or curing diseases? Do these theories tell us about the intrinsic structure of reality, or are they simply the best tools available for predicting and controlling nature? Are the longest-lasting and most frequently relied upon theories stable because they match a stable reality, or because scientists get together to keep them stable, as politicians get together to keep existing political arrangements intact?

Philosophers like Latour and Kuhn, wary of the idea that reality has an intrinsic nature that scientific inquiry is destined to reveal, are inclined to say that science might have done as good a job if it had never come up with either quarks or genes. As they see it, scientific progress

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is like biological evolution: no particular life-form is *destined* to emerge, and lots of different ones might have turned out to be equally good at survival. In this view, scientific theories are tools that do a job. They do it well, but some other tools might perhaps have done the same job equally well.

As Hacking says, many scientists find this view absurd. He himself is dubious about it, but he is inclined to be even more dubious about the idea that reality has an intrinsic structure that science accurately describes. These latter doubts are aroused by the notorious, persistent, seemingly insoluble perplexities to which the notion of "intrinsic" gives rise. The most familiar of these is the question How can we ever hope to compare reality as it is in itself, naked and undescribed, with our descriptions of it? Many philosophers have given up on the notions of "intrinsic" and "in itself," as a result of their failure to answer that question.

The stalemate that Hacking brilliantly describes but does not try to break is between many scientists' intuition of the inevitability of quarks and many philosophers' suspicion that the claim of inevitability makes sense only if the idea of the intrinsic structure of reality makes sense. This teeter-totter between conflicting intuitions is, Hacking rightly says, a genuine intellectual problem. Which answer one gives to his third question—about the source of the stability of the most reliable bits of science—is likely to be a matter of which side of the seesaw has most recently descended.

These alternating intuitions have been in play ever since Protagoras said "Man is the measure of all things" and Plato rejoined that the measure must instead be something nonhuman, unchanging, and capitalized—something like The Good, or The Will of God, or The Intrinsic Nature of Physical Reality. Scientists who, like Steven Weinberg, have no doubt that reality has an eternal, unchanging, intrinsic structure which natural science will eventually discover are the heirs of Plato. Philosophers like Kuhn, Latour, and Hacking think that Protagoras had a point, and that the argument is not yet over.

The most vocal and inflamed participants in the so-called science wars are treating the latest version of this fine old philosophical controversy as a big deal. In the very long run, perhaps, it will prove to be one. Maybe someday the idea of

human beings answering to an independent authority called How Things Are in Themselves will be obsolete. In a thoroughly de-Platonized, fully Protagorean culture the only answerability human beings would recognize would be to one another. It would never occur to them that "the objective" could mean more than "the agreed-upon upshot of argument." In such a culture we would have as little use for the idea of the intrinsic structure of physical reality as for that of the will of God. We would view both as unfortunate and obsolete social constructions.

BUT there is no hurry, no urgent need to bring this perpetual seesaw to rest. Scientists who agree with Kuhn are not about to do anything very different from what their colleagues who agree with Weinberg do. Their disagreements come up only in after-hours chat, not during the daily grind in the lab. Analogously, politicians who think that human rights are somehow built into the ahistorical structure of the human soul usually propose the same policies as those who think that human rights are an admirable recent invention. In the short term, philosophical differences just do not matter that much. In neither science nor politics is philosophical correctness, any more than theological correctness, a requirement for useful work.

Hacking's book will help its readers understand why they need not worry that civilization will collapse if Nietzsche and Foucault continue to be taken seriously, and also why those who describe themselves as postmodern (by now a somewhat musty adjective) are not as radical, original, or relevant to moral and political deliberation as they sometimes think. The science wars are in part a product of deep and long-lasting clashes of intuition, but mostly they are just media hype—journalists inciting intellectuals to diabolize one another. Diabolization may be helpful in keeping intellectuals aroused and active, but it need not be taken very seriously.

Hacking's book is an admirable example of both useful debunking and thoughtful and original philosophizing—an unusual combination of good sense and technical sophistication. After he has said his say about the science wars, Hacking concludes with fascinating essays on, among other things, fashions in mental disease, the possible genesis of dolomitic rock from the activity of nanobacteria, government financing of weapons re-

search, and the much-discussed question of whether the Hawaiians thought Captain Cook was a god. In each he makes clear the contingency of the questions scientists find themselves asking, and the endless complexity of the considerations that lead them to ask one question rather than another. The result helps the reader see how little light is shed on actual scientific controversies by either traditionalist triumphalists or postmodernist unmaskers. ☞

Soft-Boiled

*Detectives aren't what
they used to be*

by

Stephen Budiansky

WHAT strange epidemic has taken hold of our detectives these days? I'm referring to the detectives who inhabit the pages of novels, and all I can say is that they are not the men (or women) they used to be. Consider, for example, these two quotations, the first from the private investigator Philip Marlowe in Raymond Chandler's classic *The Lady in the Lake*, the second from Detective Inspector John Rebus in Ian Rankin's *Strip Jack*. Two detectives relaxing after a hard day at the office—or, rather, a hard day driving around Los Angeles or Edinburgh, as the case may be, in pursuit of criminals. But what a difference a half century makes.

I peeled off my coat and tie and sat down at the desk and got the office bottle out of the deep drawer and bought myself a drink. It didn't do any good. I had another, with the same result.

He lay down in the foaming bath and closed his eyes, breathing deeply, the way his doctor had told him to. Relaxation technique, he'd called it. He wanted Rebus to relax a bit more. High blood pressure, nothing serious, but all the same . . . Of course, there were pills he could take, beta-blockers. But the doctor was in favour of self-help. Deep relaxation. Self-hypnosis.

Foaming bath? Deep relaxation? The only time Philip Marlowe ever experi-

enced deep relaxation was when someone knocked him over the head with a tire iron, which, come to think of it, was fairly frequently. Marlowe didn't go around fretting about sissy stuff like high blood pressure either. It took something serious, like being sapped twice with a black-jack, choked, beaten around the jaw with a gun barrel, shackled to a bedstead, and shot up with heroin and scopolamine by the bad guys, before he would admit he was suffering from a health problem—and even then he'd refuse to see a doctor. His course of treatment following that particular incident was, as usual, manly and direct: "I reached for the bottle and stood it near me and waited for the heat to get to my heart. My heart began to pound, but it was back up in my chest again, not hanging on a shoelace." Now, that's self-help.

It's not that modern detectives have become wimps, exactly. But even the men of action among them are becoming depressingly like the rest of us: they are self-absorbed; they worry about secondhand smoke; they redecorate their apartments; they try to make sure to get enough exercise and eat right; they experience "stress"; they talk about their "relationships" ad nauseam. Marlowe went to college and can quote Shakespeare, and underneath his tough-guy exterior he is honest and decent and sensitive. But he chose a life that takes him—and us—into a demi-monde of lowlifes, crooked cops, black-mailers, sudden death. He has run away from his own past (which he scarcely ever discusses), from bourgeois life with a wife and children ("I'm unmarried because I don't like policemen's wives" is as much as he ever explains), and we get to run away with him. Of course he drinks too much. Bad food and loneliness? They come with the territory: "I gobbled what they called the regular dinner, drank a brandy to sit on its chest and hold it down, and went out on to the main street." Of course he is ruining his health with his hours. Of course he is being dragged down by the foulness of the company he keeps—the drunks and pushers and the burned-out old men and the rich and powerful hypocrites. Of course he is lonely without a wife or a girlfriend. He just has the decency to shut up about it. The reason an old-fashioned detective like Marlowe or Ross MacDonald's Lew Archer doesn't talk about his private life, we sense, is that he doesn't have one, and would just as soon not be reminded.

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THE 1990s detective can't shut up about anything. It's hard to go even a few pages without being assaulted by a confession of inner feelings. We get to hear about the very hard time Inspector Rebus has deciding whether to move in with Patience Aitken, who doesn't actually love him but wants to offer “her solidity, her protection.” James Lee Burke's New Orleans detective, Dave Robicheaux, was in Vietnam “in the early days of the war,” and this has left him with a sizable reservoir of musings about personal anger, which he taps frequently. The Seattle homicide detective J. P. “Beau” Beaumont, created by J. A. Jance, is practically a walking self-help manual. “Abusers are controllers,” he explains to no one in particular, when he isn't explaining his lack of a father figure as a child. When a gay stagehand is murdered in *Taking the Fifth*, Beau gets to tell us about confronting his homophobia. As it happens, Beau has just designed and furnished his very nice condominium with the help of an interior decorator who is—believe it or not—homosexual. “[He] was a nice guy who had forced me to come face-to-face with some of my own deep-seated feelings of intolerance,” Beau explains.

But what really gets these fellows wanting to open up is the subject of confronting their drinking problems. In earlier J. P. Beaumont novels, such as *Until Proven Guilty* and *Trial by Fury*, Beau downs a lot of bottles of MacNaughton's, a cheap Canadian whisky—pretty understandable, you'd think, given that he has just had to kill his own wife in self-defense after it turns out that she is the murderer. But then Beau discovers AA, and we're in for it. He tells us in *Payment in Kind*,

Anyone who thinks the Alcoholics Anonymous program is a walk in the park hasn't sat down to do Step 4, which entails making a searching moral inventory of yourself, or Step 8, which involves making a list of all the people you have wronged in your lifetime, people to whom you ought to make amends while you still have a chance.

Mercifully, Beau is on Step 8 already, so we manage to duck the moral inventory. But having just been given a full account of Beau's feelings of hostility and resentment toward his grandparents, who he believes kicked his mother out of the house when, at age sixteen, she became pregnant with him, we can guess where

things are heading. Subsequent novels offer plenty of opportunities for Beau to share his feelings about what AA means to him. When Beau visits a club for alcoholics called Club 449, he orders an Americano and informs us that page 449 of the book *Alcoholics Anonymous* “deals with acceptance.” He spends a lot of time commenting on how hard it is to find a parking place in Seattle, and how bad the traffic is these days.

Detective Dave Robicheaux seems to be made of sterner stuff. He has bigger worries than parking and his struggle to overcome feelings of prejudice against marginalized groups. He gets shot at and beaten up with a bracing regularity, and wends a trail through an assortment of roughneck dives, strip joints, and encounters with corrupt cops, drug kingpins, and southern-Louisiana thugs (including a hair-raisingly sadistic former *ton-ton macoute*) that would do Philip Marlowe proud. Being tortured by having his head held underwater in a bathtub (in *The Neon Rain*) brings back some bad memories of Vietnam, but he seems to recover with remarkable aplomb: he mows down an impressive gang of bad guys without a pause for inner reflection. Pretty soon, though, he's dropping references to “sobriety.” Sure enough, he's in AA too, and showing how he can sling pop-psychology insights about “denial” with the best of them.

Being a “recovering” alcoholic is almost getting to be a requirement for being a fictional detective, as much a part of the standard issue as Marlowe's .38 and office bottle. The current roster of sleuths in AA also includes Anna Pigeon, the park ranger who solves murders in Nevada Barr's detective novels; Matt Scudder in Lawrence Sanders's series; and Maggie Elliott in Elizabeth Atwood Taylor's *Murder at Vassar*. Inspector Rebus isn't actually in AA, but we learn in *The Hanging Garden* that his friend Jack has “helped Rebus get off the booze” and has told him he “could phone any time he liked”; the star of Lilian Jackson Braun's “The Cat Who . . .” series is also conspicuously on the wagon.

THE phenomenon of detectives in AA is baffling. The aim is probably to make them more human. But this definition of “human” seems to be taken directly from a culture in which the measure of honesty is the degree to which one gets in

touch with one's feelings and confesses to weakness. (Philip Marlowe, in contrast, is clearly in denial.) Though the action and plots of contemporary detective fiction are as escapist as ever, the heroes seem to have been plucked from what in children's fiction is called "problem stories"—epitomized by the Berenstain Bears series, in which the moral lesson is always that it's okay if (pick one) you have a physical handicap, you have a bad

dream, you are afraid of going to the doctor, your family has to move, your mother gets a job. The point of reading such stories is to affirm the dull and boring ways in which we cope with our dull and boring problems. Yet the appeal of the classic detectives is that they defy society's conventions. Why are the creators of today's detective fiction trying so hard to make their heroes just like everyone else—or, worse, like everyone on a talk-show sofa? ☞

BRIEF REVIEWS



River-Horse: The Logbook of a Boat Across America

by William Least Heat-Moon.
Houghton Mifflin/Peter Davison,
528 pages, \$26.00.

Mr. Heat-Moon's plan to cross the United States by boat required a series of friends as copilots, all referred to as Pilotis, a fiberglass C-Dory stripped down like a Viking war galley, and a mythical character known as the prudent mariner, whose advice usually took effect by hindsight. There was also a land-based tow wagon hauling a boat trailer for the unavoidable portages. The weather was good and bad, the water was easy or terrifying, the stopping points were canal ghost towns, active cities, historical sites (Mr. Heat-Moon has a fine taste for those), and one spooky island. The people met along the way ranged from dour lockkeepers to local literati. (Mr. Heat-Moon has a fine ear for telling speech and great skill in quick characterization.) The log of the *Nikawa* records a splendidly impractical adventure, which the reader is privileged to share.

Darkling I Listen

by John Evangelist Walsh.
St. Martin's, 208 pages, \$24.95.

Writing of Keats's last days in Italy, Mr. Walsh does well by the loyal, long-suffering Joseph Severn, who accompa-

nied Keats to Rome with no idea of the fatal ordeal to come, for the poet's illness had not yet been recognized as tuberculosis. The biographer includes details often overlooked by writers covering Keats's entire life, and these are not necessarily as important or as revealing as Mr. Walsh believes. He offers considerable information on the later life of Fanny Brawne, which was not, in terms of the period, particularly remarkable except for her marriage to a man a dozen years younger than she. What the author does not consider is the possibility that Keats's overwrought, neurotically possessive love letters to Fanny—letters that should have caused a sensible young woman to break off the engagement—were a symptom of his disease. Mr. Walsh makes claims of perceptive revelation that his text does not altogether support.

The Basque History of the World

by Mark Kurlansky.
Walker, 400 pages, \$25.00.

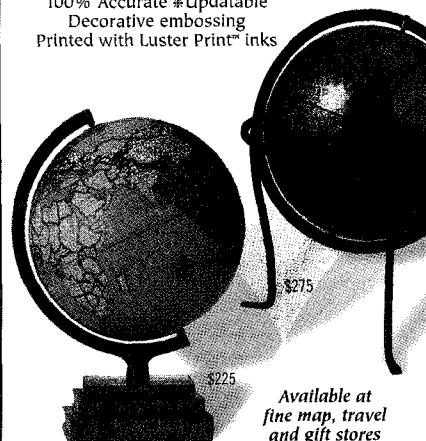
Mr. Kurlansky began covering Basque affairs for the *International Herald Tribune* twenty-five years ago. He has the highest regard for Basques—a people with a unique language, firm traditions, and a recognizable territory, but no country and no government. They have character, however, well illustrated a thousand years ago, when they had established a trade in salt-cured whale meat. They hunted

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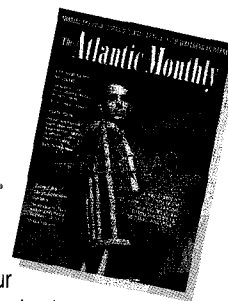
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whales in the Bay of Biscay, in small shore-based boats. Then came a Viking incursion. The Basques observed dried codfish (air-dried and as hard as a board) and superior shipbuilding technique. They adopted the technique and went north to codfish water. They applied their salt-cure method to the cod, and did great trade with the new product, whose descendant is still in grocery stores. By the time Mr. Kurlansky's lively, anecdotal, all-encompassing history of Basque ingenuity and achievement concludes, one is inclined to believe that all Spain would benefit if Basques were politely recruited to manage the country's finances and technology and otherwise left to do things their way on their home ground.

The Headless Bust

by Edward Gorey.

Harcourt Brace, 64 pages, \$15.00.

By Mr. Gorey's standards, this is an amiable work—no hint of horrors off-stage, and largely trifling troubles reported in casual verses. The subtitle may explain the author's purpose: "A Melancholy Meditation for the False Millennium." Possible translation: "A Weary Protest Against Pointless Excitement."

The Stupidest Things Ever Said by Politicians

by Ross and Kathryn Petras.

Pocket Books, 274 pages, \$12.00.

This collection of inanities should be kept out of the hands of the mentally deficient, lest more of them be inspired to run for public office.

The Girls

by Helen Yglesias.

Delphinium/HarperCollins,

224 pages, \$19.00.

The girls are four Jewish sisters separated by distance and position. Jenny, Ms. Yglesias's protagonist, is a well-controlled intellectual, a renegade pseudonym. When she gets a frantic appeal for help, she flies to Miami Beach prepared to do her best. She is eighty years old, the youngest of the four, and quickly gets into a noisy squabble with the next older sister. Flora is emotionally exuberant, lives in a purple apartment, dyes her hair crow-black, and provides comic en-

tertainments at geriatric gatherings. The collision between Jenny and the garrulous Flora is funny and also sad, for their shared problem is the older sisters, both near death and needing care. As a study of spirit and courage in old age, the novel is acute and sympathetic. As a visitor's view of Miami Beach and its population of the lame, the deaf, and the wheelchair, it is cruel. In its view of the affluent Orthodox disporting themselves in expensive wigs and miniature yarmulkes attached with bobby pins, it is downright venomous.

Dr. Seuss Goes to War

by Richard H. Minear,

cartoons by Theodor Seuss Geisel.

The New Press, 240 pages, \$25.00.

Geisel's Seuss signature (the "Dr." came later) began at Dartmouth, when he had a row with the authorities over bootleg booze. One of his German grandfathers had established a brewery in Springfield, Massachusetts, and young Theodor could hardly have been expected to take Prohibition seriously. After some cartooning for *Judge* he did advertising work ("Quick, Henry! The Flit!") and connected with the newspaper *PM* in 1941. *PM* could be infuriatingly self-righteous at times, but it was firmly anti-fascist and "against people who push other people around," two points that suited Geisel. His editorial cartoons appeared from 1941 to 1943, when he received an Army commission. The drawings, instantly recognizable in style, furiously attacked isolationists, appeasers, racists, Charles Lindbergh's *America Firsters*, Father Coughlin's anti-Semitism, dawdling politicians, indolent citizens, profiteers, and anyone else impeding the abolition of Hitler, Mussolini, and the Japanese war machine. Geisel later explained, "I was intemperate, unhumorous in my attacks . . . and I'd do it again." Mr. Minear's text gives solid context to the drawings resurrected in this collection. They were not entirely unhumorous. They were, and are, great cartooning.

—Phoebe-Lou Adams

Recent books by Atlantic authors:

A Clearing in the Distance: Frederick Law Olmsted and America in the Nineteenth Century by Witold Rybczynski. Scribner, 416 pages, \$28.00. Witold Rybczynski writes frequently for *The Atlantic* on architecture.



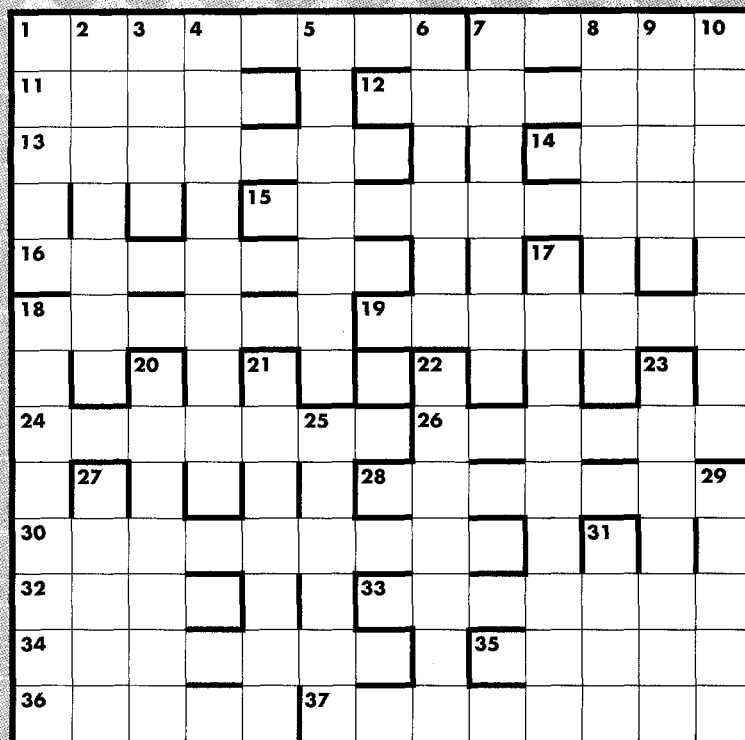
THE PUZZLER

by Emily Cox and Henry Rathvon

Downsizing

Every clue answer must shed one letter before it will fit into the diagram; these deleted letters never come from unchecked squares (squares in which answers don't intersect). The letters thus dropped, when taken in clue order (Acrosses preceding Downs), will spell out a cryptic clue whose words have the following lengths: 7, 5, 2, 6, 3, 2, 9, 6. The answer to this clue is a five-letter word of a certain size, whose corresponding symbol is to be entered in the diagram's central box. Answers include four proper nouns.

The solution to last month's Puzzler appears on page 123.



Across

1. Introduce new downsizing (9)
7. Bard outside I will make more comfortable (6)
11. Models exercising rarely (6)
12. Downsize to make smooth? (8)
13. Member came down on club's point of law (8)
14. Strip of weapons in lunar module (5)
15. Odd elastic buckles out of place (10)
16. Alien in Pisces shows charms (8)
18. Acts as boss in grim courts (7)
19. Get turned around in errant plan (8)
24. Ran last of articles in block letters (8)
26. French well surrounded by a mountain on all sides (7)
28. Opera gig could produce a run of notes (8)
30. Female is about to provide a substitute for hot spots (10)
32. Writers in sulky moods about love (5)

33. For all the world, an erotic novel (8)
34. The opposite of "stick" in pronouncements (8)
35. Specify northern island's name (6)
36. Maroon thread (6)
37. Mexican article in the hodgepodge having no central idea (9)

Down

1. Aid pair of liners caught in shoal (6)
2. Those voting for English speakers in colleges (8)
3. Dickens's Barnaby is impolite when eating bit of gruel (5)
4. Company with beer and perfume merging (10)
5. Best in fashion—if tie's tacked (8)
6. Stone implement clobbered the lion (7)
7. Laugh over Marlon, sick of testosterone perhaps (8)

8. Fabricate article about a Spanish volcano (5,3)
9. Medical drama's last character accepts a true substitute (6)
10. Fixing note on me kicking the bucket (9)
17. Secure win in chess for fellow in a stall (10)
18. Parental choices and commercial choices (9)
20. Verse writer merriest when drunk (8)
21. Senator's consuming ring pastries (8)
22. California boxing official, heartless and gay (8)
23. Fire again, and rule it "error" (8)
25. Tearing apart one of Arthur's knights (7)
27. Pet cur sloppily clipped ahead of time (6)
29. Victor's not starting things near the center (6)
31. Run off with small duck (5)

Note: The instructions above are for this month's puzzle only. It is assumed that you know how to decipher clues. For a complete introduction to clue-solving, send in addressed, stamped long envelope to The Atlantic Puzzler, 77 North Washington Street, Boston, Mass. 02114.

WORD COURT

by Barbara Wallraff

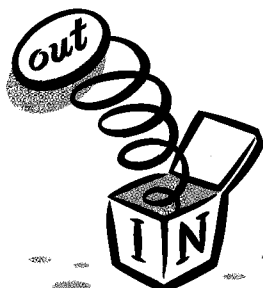
Have you noticed the “cool” use of *out of* to signify “in”? An acquaintance was telling me about a company with which he does business: “They’re out of Detroit,” he said. “Are they in . . . Pontiac?” I asked. “No, no, they’re out of Detroit.” “Oh—Flint?” I asked. “They’re in Detroit,” he finally said, emphasis on the preposition, as if I hadn’t been listening. I, brows up: “Oh! They’re actually *IN* Detroit! I thought they were *OUT OF* Detroit.”

Maybe I was unkind. Maybe he was using *out of* in the “from” sense: “conducting business out of a hotel room,” “the QE2, out of Southampton,” “a bat out of hell.” But I suspect he was trying to sound less like a person with a widget supplier in Detroit and more like—clarity?! Cool guys talk different, dude!—a character out of Elmore Leonard.

Gerry L’Orange
Montreal, Quebec

Cool guys have been talking differently from others at least since Raymond Chandler’s day. But I did find quite a few contemporary examples of this construction when I went looking for them, and most of those that weren’t referring to shipping did seem to have something to prove. From *Broadcasting & Cable* magazine, for instance: “Studio executives say the show will be taped *out of* the Los Angeles Sports Arena and will feature 10 actors/warriors competing against three contestants.” From *The Washington Post*: “At a public reception the other night, Michael Hinkle, 29—he now runs an art doll consulting firm *out of* Los Angeles—fondly recalls his years of ‘building a collection for Demi Moore.’”

That second example also suggests the rationale for *out of*—where there is any sort of rationale beyond the one you



suspect. Neither “consulting firm *in* Los Angeles” nor “consulting firm *from* Los Angeles” would convey as effectively as the published version that this is one art-doll consultant under whom grass does not grow: the guy is on the move. Much the same justification applies to saying that somebody or other is *based* somewhere, as opposed to just *living* somewhere, the way most of us do.

A co-worker always argued with me over the use of *since*. I felt that the word could be used correctly in the following sentence: “*Since the water is green, you probably have an algae problem.*” He maintained that because was more correct here, because (since?) it more correctly demonstrated cause and effect. *Since*, he said, denotes the passage of time: “*The water has become green since the early spring.*” I have seen both used and believe that *since* in the other sense is also correct, and is more widely used than because. Most people I polled thought *since* sounded better. I would like to know your opinion.

Paul J. Forbes
San Francisco, Calif.

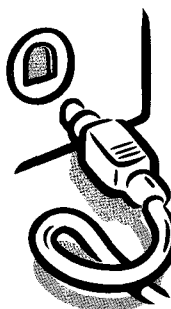
The conjunction *since* can mean both “because” and “from that point onward,” so when it appears at the beginning of a sentence, it can sometimes leave listeners or readers groping to discover which meaning is intended: “*Since the water turned clear, we have stopped worrying about it.*”

There’s less chance for ambiguity in the middle of a sentence, after some clues about where the thought is heading have been strewn about.

One important clue is, usually, the tenses of verbs in the sentence—though the example I just gave you contains the

one truly ambiguous possibility. A clause introduced by *since* in its time-related sense is supposed to contain a past-tense verb (such as *turned*, above), and the main clause of the sentence should be in the present perfect (*have stopped*). A sentence with a causal *since* can employ such verbs as well. However, it rarely does. Your “*Since the water is green*” sentence certainly doesn’t follow the temporal pattern. And its *since* clause is short and hard to get lost in. I think the sentence is fine.

Do you find the terms male and female offensive when used to describe such things as electrical connectors? A dongle, for example, looks like the plug at the end of a printer cable, but has no cable attached to it; it fits into the printer port on the back of a PC. One end of it is conventionally referred to as male, and the other end as female. As a technical writer, I discussed these terms with a co-worker, because we were about to include them in a manual. Although these are industry-standard terms, she found them offensive. I was surprised at her response, so I took a quick survey. Other women found them “possibly offensive.” No men objected. We ultimately took out the references. Did we just cave in to political correctness?



Colin Barnett
Baltimore, Md.

Taking the questions at the beginning and the end of your letter in order, no and yes.

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